

A King's Favourite

Madame Du Barry

CLAUD SAINT-ANDRÉ

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Madame du Barry
From a, hitherto, unpublished, miniature
by N. Laureince.

:: A KING'S ::
FAVOURITE
MADAME DU BARRY

AND HER TIMES FROM HITHERTO
UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS BY
CLAUD SAINT-ANDRE WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY PIERRE DE
NOLHAC AND 17 ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

“**R**OMANCE is only history in miniature ; history is the true romance carried to the highest point of development.” To no history is this saying of M. Paul Bourget more applicable than to that of the times of Madame Du Barry. The story of her life, merely the outline of her career—her origin, rise to favour, disgrace and death—surpasses in interest the whole romantic biography of womanhood ; but to be of full value such an account must above all be truthful and free from the arts of the romancer.

Until recently the memory of this fair transgressor has been marked chiefly by its lack of truth. Apart from the equal right of all historical personalities to justice of treatment, it is a matter of importance to have exact knowledge of their character and the part they played, the more so when the judgment pronounced on them is used to condemn a sovereign, a reign, or even a whole century.

The celebrated book of the Goncourts, for instance, puerile and false as it is, has long been held authoritative : “ The people must lose their faith and their illusions when they hear of the exploits of this girl, as for instance when, excited by champagne, she breaks the windows of the *Œil-de-Bœuf* . . . Madame Du Barry is mischievous like the courtesan she is, who pursues her calling and obeys her instincts. . . . Involuntarily by her very nature she brings into discredit all that comes into contact with her. Whether she forces Zamore to stick his fingers in the chancellor’s wig, now the home of cockchafers, or whether, clothed in her shift and with bare throat, she makes the nuncio of the Pope present her with her slippers, she always plays her part, that of mocking, debasing and lowering

to her own standard, all institutions, traditions, and persons. . . ." These are but ridiculous anecdotes, the stupidities of pamphleteers, which have no other merit than the literary one of the glowing style of a Michelet. To take them seriously one would have to be ignorant of the whole life of the court in eighteenth century France, and one's judgment could only be at the mercy of rhetorical libellers.

The obscene legend that has grown up around Madame Du Barry is the combined work of the parliamentary party and Choiseul. It has been further popularised by writers, at all times sure of a public, who, under the hypocritical pretext of vindicating morality, have taken pleasure in scandalmongering. Their tales have been received with an unwholesome eagerness, without much regard for the truth. Nor is it on the ground of morals alone that our century fills its academic text-books with a proper indignation ; the truth has been held back from us by the friends of Choiseul during a great part of the reign of Louis XV. Clever and elegantly malicious, they always held the front of the stage. They have written so much and lied so wittily that we are ready to believe them in all things. Whose judgment has not involuntarily been coloured by their rancour, which of us has not spoken of their adversaries in the contemptuous tones of Chanteloup ?

The fairest evidence relating to Madame Du Barry's life is to be got from those who had no reason to be biassed against her, who simply watched the career of one of their contemporaries. This evidence is in every case far from disparaging, and does homage to more than her incontestable beauty.

Sénac de Meilhan, who witnessed the end of her career, passed a by no means severe judgment on her character : " The most important events which took place during her time of power made no more impression than the images thrown on a screen by a magic lantern. She had taken no part in them, and they left only a confused memory. After the Revolution she distinguished herself by her marked generosity to those in danger of becoming its victims.

Finally, this woman, whom nothing had protected from vice in her youth, and who had been led away by poverty and evil counsel, had done no one injury when her power of inflicting wrong was unlimited. Such moderation, remarkable in one in her position, gives her the right to lenient treatment from the most severe of judges."

The Count d'Espinchal, who knew her before her rise to power, and who was later one of her intimate friends, describes in a few words the lady of Louveciennes: "She is good and generous, an agreeable companion, the best of friends, most charitable and always ready to do a kindness. Both at home and in public she bears herself with becoming decency, giving the lie to the gross slanders calumny has delighted in spreading since the growth of her power." The Marquis de Bouillé adds some further traits to this description: "Her disposition was in no sense common, much less vulgar; though without pretensions to brilliance, she had more wit than people gave her credit for; besides, her kindliness no less than her simplicity might have been sufficient compensation."

The Prince de Ligne, who was a friend of hers from the first, defends Louis XV.'s last weakness: "I have seen him every day with Madame Du Barry during the last year of his life. It is astounding that those who were themselves no better should cry out at his wickedness; that the vile courtiers of Madame de Pompadour, a little nobody who ran away from her husband, should exclaim against the corruption of morals which allowed yet another mistress and that a woman of much better feeling, who did not attempt to settle questions of war and peace."

Even the malice of the Prince de Talleyrand has spared her, for he put her for style and language above Madame de Pompadour. The latter, he says, "differs in all respects from Madame Du Barry, who, though less well educated, had attained a certain purity of language. Madame Du Barry's eyes were not so large, but were more expressive, her features were well-cut, her hair of great beauty; she liked talking, and could tell a story pleasantly enough."

We find, then, in serious contemporary records no foundation for the charge of grossness of language, with which some have attempted to soil her pretty lips. As for her manners, they were perfect from the beginning. "She is very beautiful, especially the lower part of her face," observes the Duke de Croÿ, "her bearing is very noble, easy, charming and unpretentious, in a word that of a gentlewoman." "I was astonished," says M. de Belleval, "considering that she was not brought up at court, to see how she had acquired the well-bred manners of the ladies there." This "very noble bearing," which enhanced to the end of her life her irreproachable beauty, had already been noticed by M. de Sartine's inspectors when, for the first time, they saw her appear at the Opera, the mistress of Jean Du Barry.

She was well-informed, and had read much. "Her conversation," according to d'Espinchal, "is interesting, and since her retirement reading has, next to her toilette, been her chief occupation." He adds that she was not endowed with "wit" in the eighteenth century sense of the word, but on the other hand, she had the art of telling a story and, among her intimate friends (for "she knew her world"), even of falling into frivolities seldom heard at Versailles. Her talk, which was so much enjoyed by her friends, was delightful. From the first moment she fascinated. "Her wide, blue eyes," relates M. de Belleval, "were fixed with engaging frankness on him to whom she spoke, as if she would read in his face the effect of her words. She had a straight little nose, a very small mouth and a complexion of dazzling purity. In a word, one soon yielded to her charm. . . ."

Her good-nature was the distinctive feature of her character. "Madame Du Barry," says Belleval, "was kind-hearted, and loved to oblige. She never bore malice, and was the first to laugh at all the rhymes made about her." All the records agree on this point, not to speak of the letters of all her friends, who were enthusiastic admirers of this goodness. "You are privileged by nature,"

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says one ; " goodness and beauty will be yours all your life long."

One need see her but once to divine this striking quality which no disillusion could embitter. " When I recalled her sweet and gracious smile," says Brissot, who spoke to her one day in Voltaire's ante-chamber, " I felt more lenient towards the favourite." And this member of the National Convention goes on to tell of a conversation on the mistresses of Louis XV. held between Mirabeau, Laclos, Henriette de Nehra and himself. As was right and proper, these virtuous souls condemned the weakness and infamy of the monarch. " But," adds Brissot, " I laughingly besought some indulgence for the Du Barry, who, though also vile, was to my mind a hundred times less odious than her rivals. After all, she had no more in common with them than an influence which she did not despotically abuse, and morals which I scarcely thought culpable. ' You are right,' said Mirabeau ; . . . ' she never issued *lettres de cachets* against those who slandered her virtue.' " And they recognised that " the dishonour of this woman was due to her birth and upbringing, and to those who debased her."

Laclos and Mirabeau have together published the portrait of Elmire, a portrait of which no single feature, whether moral or physical, told against her, and which extolled her at the expense of Madame de Pompadour. " Nature had endowed Elmire with more various grace than is often united in a single person. . . . The eye, charmed by the expression of her face, found the same attraction in her graceful bearing, her perfect figure, her rounded arms, her beautiful hands. . . . Elmire crossed a gulf when she left her humble roof for the palace of a king, but she filled her new position without effort. . . . [She] was not puffed up with pride, nor did she humble those whom she might have disowned. . . . Elmire, wiser than her predecessor, took no notice of the scandalous biographies and the fictitious or falsified letters, which were so assiduously circulated. Malice deceived itself, for Elmire did not

lose the heart of her lover or the affection of her friends. . . . Elmire will have no cause to fear the judgment of posterity."

Thus moralists, courtiers and revolutionaries alike have all given a sympathetic portrait of Madame Du Barry.

M. Claude Saint-André has brought before us in this brilliant and valuable book more than the conventional portrait of a courtesan; he has delineated the character of a woman. For the first time we see Madame Du Barry live, an actual personality of incontestable charm. The author has reconciled seemingly contradictory qualities by his conscientious historical research. Nothing has been hidden: the origin of the royal mistress and the culpable intrigues by which she attained so high a position; her readiness to accept the low standard of morality so prevalent among many of the women of her time. Yet the part she played is explained without prejudice and with a thorough knowledge of the period. Friend and foe alike have been minutely interrogated, and if one may here and there suspect the young writer of some weakness for his heroine, it is because he has that gift of sympathy without which one may not hope to gain true insight into a man's soul, a precious gift to him who would study the personalities of the past.

By his skilful exposition of the facts he has verified, and by his attention to the evidence of witnesses, many of whom were unknown or forgotten, he has been able to deal fairly by the base legends that have gathered round Madame Du Barry. On the other hand, he gives with exactness the list of the liaisons of this woman, whom the unfortunate circumstances of her life devoted to a career of pleasure. Despite the elegance with which she sinned, she is to be pitied for having been taught by that terrible master of depravity, the "Roué." Her début at Versailles was a scandal, but it appears to have violated the rules of etiquette rather than those of morality. If there are degrees in vice, Louis XV. had certainly plumbed lower depths, while the adultery was only on one side as the Queen was

dead ; for the matter of that the marriage contract did not count for much. Such history must be lightly dealt with, and though we should be careful not to absolve what ought to be condemned, we must not forget, in the words of Mérimée, that "the same actions are differently valued at different times."

The contemporaries of the King were not as sensitive as we to certain egregious violations of morality on his part. Thus the clerical party, blinded by their hatred of Choiseul, accepted a favourite, "since there had to be one," provided she had no ideas on philosophy. There have been tales of the levity of certain ecclesiastics, on hearing of Madame Du Barry's long-desired presentation, in which they chose to see the triumph of Esther over the persecutor of the Hebrews. At that period, too, a priest of the Cevennes wrote to one of his fellow-clergy : "M. de La Beaumelle enjoys now the protection of the King's mistress ; he is going to Paris . . . and if he can be of any service to us, especially to us priests, he certainly will."

Seeing that the nominal defenders of public morality were so complaisant, why should it be surprising that the courtesan world censured Louis XV. merely for this further weakness, calculated only to grieve his daughters and fill them with anxiety for his welfare ? The king knew quite well that he would have been forgiven soon enough for a Duchess de Grammont, or some such great lady. He wrote to his minister : "They would all be at her feet if" and his reticence was significant. Again : "Do they want me to take a girl of quality ? " he said. In fact, the severest cannot but recognise that his well-bred depravity, accompanied as it was by all the graces of the period, was much less repellent than the intemperate life of so many monarchs of the age.

By all means let us condemn our sovereigns for the follies they have committed ; but do not let us spread further this false image of the French court as one devoid of all dignity and modesty, when on closer observation we may find in it so many examples of virtue, honour and noble

devotion to duty. As far as possible we must rehabilitate the reign of Louis XV., of which the shortcomings alone have attracted attention. The achievements of the France of that day were not confined to the world of letters. The nation often enjoyed the services of an admirable staff of ministers, generals and provincial governors. The abuses ascribed to this century apply to all periods, and there would be little difficulty in finding them in our own. But this reign was so long that the glories of Fontenoy were dimmed by the miseries of its end, a tragedy which leaves much the deeper impression on the mind.

In future, Madame Du Barry should be less of a shameful memory to our time. Even if she is to be blamed for much foolish expenditure, we must remember that it encouraged the arts, of which, indeed, she was a noteworthy patron; many a masterpiece in our possession owes its existence to her commands. By no means one of the lesser merits of this book is the fresh light it throws on her active and well-directed personal interest in art, kept up according to her means even after her disgrace. Indeed, had she been longer at Versailles, the titles so often given to Madame de Pompadour might well have been assigned to her.

In his study of Madame Du Barry during the Revolution, the young historian has attacked a difficult problem, which none of his predecessors has solved. The Goncourts, whose interest was confined to the woman of pleasure, lost themselves among papers taken at random from the Archives without discovering those of most importance. The conscientious Vatel, indignant at their levity, corrected many inaccuracies and used a number of original documents, but was himself occasionally liable to mistake. His obvious intention was to prove Madame Du Barry's innocence of all the charges which brought her to the scaffold, and the end of his work, which he was unable to revise, is only a medley of unclassified material. Much elucidation had still to be done, requiring many new sources of information.

In the first place, the author has established that Madame Du Barry, interested as she was in politics through her

relations with M. de Brissac, did not remain inactive during the last tragic years of the monarchy. From the beginning of the Revolution she placed her fortune at the disposal of the royal family, and a sale of some of her diamonds, which took place in Holland at the end of 1789, was probably connected with this offer. We cannot doubt her liberality if we read a letter from the Count d'Espinchal, which confirms and particularises the evidence of Sénac de Meilhan. Introduced into the nobility of France and enriched by the king to the displeasure of all, the Countess was yet able to fulfil with great generosity those obligations to the descendants of Louis XV., which most others in her place would have neglected.

Happy in her retirement and her luxury, this still beautiful and beloved woman appears to have sacrificed all to what she considered to be her duty ; urged by events which appealed to her goodness of heart, and guided by partisans who could make use of her good-nature, she and her riches cannot have failed to perform signal service to the counter-revolution. In this respect there was undoubtedly justification for the denunciations which were poured on her, and for the attacks of her enemy, the citizen Greive ; the Tribune of the Revolution, so blindly prodigal of innocent blood, certainly struck down a genuine conspirator in Madame Du Barry.

Too little is known of the secret movements of Nathaniel Parker Forth, the English agent who was involved in our revolutionary troubles, and who was mentioned both in contemporary pamphlets and diplomatic correspondence as being charged with important missions. It was he who by a singular coincidence became the controlling influence of Madame Du Barry's life after the theft of her diamonds at Louveciennes. This theft, committed by English subjects on the night of January 10, 1791, and accompanied by suspicious circumstances in the household of the Countess, was thought later by many to have been engineered by Forth himself. The matter can be explained more simply ; but it formed an excellent opportunity for those who had

an interest in providing some devoted person with a plausible excuse for leaving France. From this point of view, they could benefit exceedingly by the lawsuit which took place in London, and there is no reason why they should not have played some such game, since it imperilled none but the Countess.

In order to identify and lay claim to her jewels, and to give evidence in an interminable lawsuit which can scarcely have required her constant presence, Madame Du Barry made four journeys to England, of which the last took place at the most dangerous time of the Revolution, when the severest decrees were issued against the *émigrés*. The need for maintaining her private interests abroad made it possible for her to ask for passports without arousing over-much suspicion, and by this means she was able to do for her friends all kinds of services as the bearer of correspondence and money. The evidence brought before the revolutionary jury, and the information added to it by her new historian, show clearly enough how she occupied her visits to London, and whom she saw there. As was natural she renewed her acquaintance with former friends; but more than that, she threw herself heart and soul into the activities of the *émigrés* among the English aristocracy, which had given her such an unexpectedly warm welcome. In passing it may be mentioned that her conduct was irreproachable, which is more than can be said for all the fair *émigrées*. Her salon was one of the centres of attraction of that pleasure-loving world, which only such terrible blows as the death of Louis XVI. could awaken from its foolish infatuation. The murder of the Duke de Brissac had made Madame Du Barry one of the earliest sufferers, and gave her from the first a more serious view of the situation, while the evidence of Bouillé is sufficient to prove the sincerity of her mourning for the king.

We shall probably never know whether her opportunities of travel and her position in English society were any help to the princes to whom she was so devoted. But her relations with the members of the English Government,

who were the most hated adversaries of the French revolutionaries, are at least evidence of grave indiscretion. The Countess did not realise that she was followed and spied on, and that gatherings, which were without doubt chiefly devoted to worldly pleasures, were destined to form the subjects of an overwhelming and fatal charge against her.

The intercourse of Madame Du Barry with the *émigrés*, her "newsbearing," which was then a breach of the law, were so open that it is surprising she could have enjoyed complete immunity for so long. It explains the indignation of such savage accusers as Greive and Blache, who, made keen-eyed by hatred, guessed that the lady of Louveciennes had faithful supporters even in the administration. They knew full well that château which figured among the "aristocratic haunts" on the banks of the Seine, and their indignation was excited by the quantity of treasure accumulated there by "the courtesan of despots." It was not merely that she corresponded abroad, that she was the keeper of hidden stores of money, that she cherished the forbidden emblems of royalty and the counter-revolutionary publications. More than that, she received a number of "suspects," many of them notorious, and after the beginning of the Terror, "conspiracies" went on daily in her charming retreat; there all the "ci-devants" were welcomed by their still beautiful hostess, a woman whom one would have thought had no care but to please. If we knew the hidden actions of the Duke de Rohan-Chabot, who was Madame Du Barry's last lover, we should no doubt be able to justify what was the essential point of the trial of Frimaire, year II., namely the speech of Fouquier-Tinville. However that be, it is certain that the Public Prosecutor condemned to death hundreds of women less "guilty" than citizeness Du Barry.

This book, vividly written yet without extravagance, puts the last and most significant touches to the character it portrays. There will be no further surprise at the "sisterly" intimacy, to use their own words, between Madame Du Barry and the Duchess de Mortemart, the daughter

of M. de Brissac. It will be possible to understand how it was that the Countess, for the sake of this new friendship born of a sacred memory, did not hesitate to risk her life by her last return to France ; and it will be vain to seek in the cross-examination at her trial signs of the panic in which she was supposed to have betrayed names and secrets, that according to popular belief brought many victims to the scaffold. Not even the Princess Lubomirska herself was compromised by the accused, who only mentioned her because a note seized at Louveciennes was signed in full ; besides, how could she imagine that her innocent correspondence would cost the unfortunate Polish Princess her life ? As for the last moments of Madame Du Barry, does not her sacrifice of her life for her beliefs and her friends make pardonable her weakness before the guillotine, a nervous collapse which in another would not have been considered blameworthy.

The Revolution laid bare the souls of many whose true selves had been hidden by their easy life, and in this time of stress Madame Du Barry showed qualities that are irreconcilable with the supposed degradation of her youth. In her last days Fate brought her into contact with another famous woman, imprisoned at the same time as she at Sainte-Pélagie. But Madame Roland no doubt averted her eyes from her fellow-prisoner, who was no more to her than a vile creature, the dissolute favourite of a detested king. It would have surprised the valiant Girondine if she had been told that this despised courtesan had shown in her time disinterestedness, devotion and self-sacrifice, that she, too, had served her party with courage, and that the friend of Buzot might well look without contempt on the friend of Brissac.

PIERRE DE NOLHAC.

Château de Versailles.

PREFACE

IN this book I have attempted to throw fresh light on the character of Madame Du Barry and the times in which she lived. I must proclaim my indebtedness to the researches of my predecessor, Charles Vatel, which have been of great use to me. He was the first to react against the pamphleteers who had previously formed the historian's only source of inspiration. But the special circumstances under which he completed his work were not favourable to an accurate portrayal of the image of whose true features he had caught a glimpse. Vatel is far from having exhausted the archives from which he has drawn his material, and which still contained many interesting surprises. It has further been found necessary to verify the originals of the extracts printed by his editor, and those which I have reproduced are now given more correctly. Numerous recent publications have given me very useful help.

The originals of the texts, which I have mentioned or quoted in full in the present work, are to be found among the "National Archives," among those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Département of Seine-et-Oise, and in various private collections. I have made use of the manuscript memoirs of the Count d'Espinchal, and of the letters which have only recently been attributed to him. Numerous extracts of Madame Du Barry's papers may also be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, to which so far little reference has been made. I mention in the course

of the book those who have been so kind as to give me information on the subject ; but I owe an especial debt of gratitude to M. Pierre de Nolhac, who has allowed me access to the unpublished documents of the Versailles Library, and who has done me the great honour of presenting this book to the public.

C. S.-A.

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A
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CHAPTER I

JEANNE BÉCU-QUANTIGNY

The Presentation of the Countess Du Barry—Her Parentage—Jeanne Bécu-Quantigny—At the Convent of Sainte-Aure—The Hairdresser Lametz—Jeanne as Lady's Companion—As Milliner—Jean Du Barry and Jeanne de Vaubernier—The "Roué" and his Circle—Jeanne at Versailles—The King's Mistress—Her Marriage with Guillaume Du Barry.

ONE evening at Versailles, after the "débotté," Louis XV. was pacing restlessly up and down the King's Chamber among the gorgeous crowd of his retinue, surprised at being kept waiting. His left arm was in a sling, having recently been injured in a fall when riding; he was pale, and showed a slight tendency to the portly, the result of his years, but a supreme elegance marked him out from among his brilliant courtiers.

A low murmur rose from the inquisitive crowd that had collected below the windows of the Chateau. It grew late, and Richelieu, the First Lord-in-Waiting, gazed eagerly into the darkness of the Cour de Marbre. Choiseul himself was absent, but his supporters were radiant, feeling sure that Madame Du Barry would not be presented after all. Soon, however, a smart equipage bearing the double escutcheon of a married woman appeared and stopped at the grand staircase. The usher opened the doors and Richelieu triumphantly announced the favourite, who entered preceded by her sponsor, the Countess de Béarn. At the dazzling apparition the King started, his eyes under their heavy eyelids lighting up with joy. The sight of this grace-

ful woman bending before him seemed to justify his love. When she rose after the three "*révérences d'adieu*," kicking back her long train with accustomed ease, even her enemies gave way to admiration and did homage to the power of beauty.

On this occasion, too, she had enhanced her attraction by choosing the most marvellous of costumes. Madame Du Barry loved to set off her fair and slender form with sumptuous white fabrics of diaphanous texture; on her presentation dress were scattered, in a mad profusion of knots, clusters and garlands, diamonds which the King had sent her the previous evening. More diamonds were on her little high-heeled slippers, and again in the elaborate coiffure whose intricacies had delayed the ceremony. The etiquette of the period had compelled her to powder her lovely golden hair and to rouge her already beautiful complexion; but such artifices served only to deepen the blue of her long, caressing eyes, half closed in lazy coquetry, and to make doubly attractive her delicate features and her mutinous lips, parted in a mocking smile at the envious and malicious.

She seemed to leave a luminous trail in the salons and staircases where an open-mouthed crowd had come to gaze at her. Serene and proud at having been chosen from among all by His Majesty, she passed on and paid her difficult visit to Mesdames de France and Monseigneur le Dauphin without a hint of awkwardness. The latter was so astounded at her audacity that he wrote in his hunting-diary, in which he noted only the most memorable events: "April 22, 1769. Presentation of Madame Du Barry."

That night, while messengers were already hastening to the courts of Europe to announce the news of her presentation, worn out with emotion, and happy in having attained at last the glory she so much desired, the favourite fell asleep to dream, perhaps, of her humble childhood, and of the long and difficult path that she had had to traverse to reach the Royal Palace. Had she wished, she could not forget her lowly origin, for the satirists and pamphleteers of the

day made it their business to remind her of it. From this her moment of triumph her enemies assailed her with that 18th century weapon, the lampoon, and no one has been the victim of more scurrilous calumnies than she. These took the form of rhymed couplets, sometimes witty, sometimes merely coarse, and were heard everywhere,—in the streets, in the salons of the capital and in the antechambers of Versailles.

She was born in the little town of Vaucouleurs in the diocese of Toul. Her baptism is registered as follows:—

Jeanne, natural daughter of Anne Bécu, surnamed Quantigny, was born on the nineteenth of August, seventeen-hundred-and-forty-three, and was baptised the same day, having for godfather Joseph Demange and for godmother Jeanne Birabin, who have signed with us.

L. Gahon, curate of Vaucouleurs.

Joseph Demange, Jeanne Birabin.¹

According to local tradition the father of the child was no other than a monk of the monastery of the "Picpus," where Anne, the fair sempstress, had work. His name was Jean Baptiste Gomard de Vaubernier, but he was known in the monastery as "frère Ange," and for a long time the little girl who was supposed to be his daughter was called "l'Ange." Later she became Mademoiselle Lange, then Mademoiselle de Vaubernier, and on the occasion of her marriage with Guillaume Du Barry the monk represented her family.

But though her origin was so humble, little Jeanne was not forgotten by the good fairy of the fairy-tales, who waved her wand over her cradle and promised her the magic gift of beauty. It was indeed a safe promise, for her grandfather, Fabien Bécu, keeper of an eating-house in Paris, was one of the most handsome men of his time, and had seduced and married a Countess de Montdidier, a de Cantigny. This accounts for the noble name of Cantini, taken by

¹ The facsimile of this extract is given by Vatel, *Histoire de Madame Du Barry*, who took it from the register of births during 1743 in Vaucouleurs. Anne Bécu was born at Vaucouleurs in 1713.

Jeanne's uncle, a footman in the service of Leopold de Lorraine and of Stanislas Leczinski, and also by her aunt, "the beautiful Hélène." Her mother, too, was a most attractive woman.

In 1747, at the age of 34, Anne gave birth to a second child, Claude, a natural son, and she then decided to leave Vaucouleurs, undoubtedly acting on the advice of M. Billard-Dumouceaux, the paymaster of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris. As he was also in the Commissariat Department of the Army, his work took him to the garrison town, and he cannot have failed to notice the beautiful sempstress. She found several relations in the capital and even at Versailles, all good people of whom history has nothing to tell but their modest position, whether as priests or shopkeepers, artisans or domestics. In 1749 Anne married in the church of Saint-Eustache a Sieur Nicolas Rançon, for whom Dumouceaux obtained from the Farmer-General's Department a sinecure of a post as storekeeper. Though he had already a titled mistress, the famous Francesca, he continued to protect the young couple after the marriage, but such a trifle would not disturb a philosophic husband of the age. Was not gallant Farmer-General Tournehem the best friend of Monsieur Poisson, although he lived openly with Madame de Pompadour's mother? Principles and prejudices have changed since then, when an easiness of morals was frankly displayed which offends against modern standards. Yet we must bear in mind that we are comparing our own times with a century that delighted in making the worst of its own vices and foibles.

The pretty child was for some years the joy of Francesca and Dumouceaux. But her education had to be thought of, and she was sent to a convent, probably on the advice of Canon Bécu or of the Abbé Bécu, both her relations, or even of Gomard himself, now the priest of Saint-Eustache.¹ Throughout her adventurous life she remembered the peace-

¹ The Rançons probably numbered several ecclesiastics among their acquaintances. Chamfort relates how "the Abbé Arnaud had held on his knee the little girl who was later to become Madame

ful years she spent in the cloister, when she was the little white daughter of the Ladies of Sainte-Aure, worshippers of the Sacred Heart. She had to wear a coarse black veil, a band of cloth around her brow and the plainest of chemisettes ; her frock was of white serge, and rough yellow shoes completed the uniform of the boarders. The regulations of this pious retreat were exceedingly strict, and no murmurs from outside were allowed to penetrate its walls. Thus it differed widely from the more worldly convents of the time. Those of Penthémont and la Présentation, for instance, allowed much latitude in the matter of dress, and on certain days their parlours were turned into salons, with all the salon's chatter, vanities and affectations. But although life at Sainte-Aure was severe and monotonous, joyous youth held its own, and Jeanne was even then the laughing child she remained all her life long.

After eight or nine years our heroine left the convent, her education finished ; she was well grounded in her religion, her writing was elegant and well formed, her spelling quite good, and she had acquired more than the elements of music and drawing. Even if we possessed the papers of the now vanished community we should probably find nothing about little Jeanne Rançon, as she was called. But we know that the results of her excellent education enabled the future favourite to develop, adorn and refine a mind naturally sensitive and attracted by the world of letters and of art. Like Madame de Pompadour, the brilliant pupil of the Ursulines, Anne's daughter showed from the day she left the convent a grace and charm which captivated all hearts, and she was not long in learning and using her power. The prayers of the good sisters who loved her so well could not save the soul of their pupil from the snare set in the path of her beauty. More often than not she was the victim of circumstances, and of her own lighthearted, impressionable nature, which made her so ready to obey

Du Barry." (*Œuvres de Chamfort*, Paris, 1867.) This was the same talented Abbé Arnaud who owed his election to the Academy in part to Madame Du Barry's good favour.

the call of love and happiness. Yet even in the midst of a whirl of festivities she sometimes remembered and withdrew awhile from the world, and in her time of fear and trouble she used to tell the beads of those jewelled rosaries that were found at Louveciennes with her *Manuel de Chrétien*.

When she was fifteen Jeanne returned to her family. She was ravishingly beautiful, with her long fair hair, her clear complexion and her convent-bred air of ingenuousness. What could be done with this dainty child, with her refined tastes and love of elegance, who watched with wonder as the great ladies passed in their gilded coaches? What else but let things take their course?

In the house of a friend Anne Rançon and her daughter made the acquaintance of a young hairdresser of the name of Lametz. He immediately fell in love with the young girl and offered to initiate her in the mysteries of his craft. She accepted, and for five months he came and instructed her in the complicated art of dressing high coiffures, powdered *à la maréchale*, and of arranging feathers, flowers and ribbons with taste and elegance. Later this episode gave rise to many calumnies, which can, however, easily be refuted by referring to a police-court affair connected with it.

Madame Lametz, a milliner, had no doubt better things in view for her son than a match with the little Rançon. So she came to rue Neuve-Saint-Étienne, in the parish of Notre-Dame-Bonne-Nouvelle, where Jeanne's relations lived, and overwhelmed them with a storm of insults and accusations, among which that of procuration was one of the least outrageous. Madame and Mademoiselle Rançon indignantly lodged a complaint at the Châtelet with the police inspector of their quarter. Judgment was in their favour, and Inspector Charpentier concluded his report as follows: "As the honour and reputation of the plaintiffs are liable to suffer from the above attacks made publicly by the said Dame Lametz, which can do them considerable harm, and as they clearly have an interest in obtaining

formal reparation, the said plaintiffs have been advised to make the present complaint to us." ¹

Subsequently her enemies distorted this incident, and it was made the subject of many verses and lampoons. In 1771 Madame du Deffand sent the following lines to Walpole as current in the society of Choiseul after his disgrace.

Je sais qu'autrefois les laquais
Ont fêté ses jeunes attraits,
Que les cochers, les *perruquiers*
L'aimaient, l'aimaient d'amour extrême,
Mais pas autant que je ne l'aime !
Avez-vous vu ma Du Barry ? . . .

Jeanne was nearly sixteen, poor, beautiful, and her future still uncertain, when she became companion to Madame de Delay de la Garde, the widow of a Farmer-General. This old lady had many acquaintances in the opulent world of finance, and very soon the girl's gaiety and pretty chatter won her a court of indiscreet admirers. With her lightheartedness and her love of luxury and pleasure, which had been denied throughout her childhood, she could not long be held back by her early scruples. Both the de la Gardes are supposed to have been her lovers. The elder had married a Mademoiselle Duval d'Epinoy, and had taken the name of Saint-Vrain from his wife's estate, one day to be bought by the banished favourite. The other was the husband of the notorious Elizabeth de Ligniville, whom in her widowhood the Châtelet sentenced as insane for the singularity of her morals.²

With a character such as Jeanne's the first downward step could not but prove decisive, and she completely under-

¹ Rançon's complaint of April 18, 1759, is published by Vatel. This Lametz episode proves the exaggeration of the *Anecdotes*, which always give "for every two lines of truth two pages of lies, or at least of errors." Cf. Vatel on the puerile assertions of the Goncourts and many others.

² Madame Du Barry's association with this woman has given rise to much slander. Cf. the shameless misinterpretation of simple facts in Pidansat de Mayrobert's *Anecdotes sur Madame la Comtesse Du Barry*, London, 1777.

stood its inevitability. In the pride of her splendid youth she dreamt of a wonderful future in store for her, and she took what seemed the shortest way of arriving at it. Her lovers were but the rungs of the ladder that led to fame. She bound herself to none, only laughed and waited for him who would give her at once the luxury and the affection which she most certainly deserved.

When Madame de la Garde noticed the conduct of her companion she instantly dismissed her. This was in 1760 or 1761, when Jeanne was eighteen. She had had enough of strict and careful supervision. Accordingly she became an assistant at the shop of a milliner, Labille, in rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs. This made it possible for her to keep up appearances, while leaving her free to wear, without exciting remark, the flounced dresses that emphasised the slenderness of her waist, and to have her long hair in ringlets under her black hood. In the luxurious showroom, with its bowls of flowers and decorated windows, she moved behind the counter, a supremely graceful figure, shedding the light of her beauty on the wealthy customers. These were not women only; among them were red-heeled marquises, great financiers, officers of the French Guards and little perfumed abbés, who helped the merry apprentice to measure out the lace they had just selected.

Many a billet-doux passed and many an appointment was made—though, perhaps, not kept, for the strictness of the master made it difficult to get away. But often, at about five o'clock, Jeanne could slip off to the promenade of the Palais Royal, to watch and laugh at the noisy courtesan, the grisette in her light lawn frock, and the lady of quality, her cheeks as painted as the flowers on her gown. From there off to the Café Gaussin, and then home again in a hurry, already fearful of the suspicious Labille and his unsparing reprimands.

That their staff might be always fresh and bright, the employers had provided them with a dormitory on the premises, where they could sleep peacefully. We can see this little world of young girls in one of Fragonard's exquisite

sepia sketches,¹ with the charm of sweet-and-twenty in all his beautiful, half-robed figures. What gaiety there is in their careless, happy faces ; we can find Jeanne in every one of these children ; here she lies dreaming on one of the great white beds ; here she is in a passion whipping a little rogue whose frock is all undone ; and here again she is the centre of a group of slender forms delicately silhouetted against the light. And what chatter there is in the dormitory. It is like a bird's nest, with some telling stories, and some confiding their hopes and fears in low voices to their bosom friends, or laughing over the day's doings. Youth, indeed, is ever the same, though the fashion of its garments may have changed and changed again.

But on Sundays all these charming young girls were quite free to amuse themselves. Jeanne went off to see her mother,² and she wore her most attractive frocks on these occasions. A spring day would see her in a fine ivory-coloured dress and a wide blue cloak, a gauzy white fichu crossed over her bare throat, and a little flower-trimmed hat perched on the top of her high coiffure, shading her beautiful eyes. For she knew well that she would not be alone where she was going. She and her companion went to the fair at Saint-Germain ; or else to the fête at Saint-Cloud, whose great trees and marbles and bubbling fountains have been made so familiar to us by the paintings of the period. There they listened to the pleasantries of Columbine, or joined the crowd of young women who watched the tricks of the jugglers. They paid a visit to the puppet-show, and while the great ladies drove past in their carriages they were trying their luck at the games of chance, and laughing at the sallies of powdered pierrots. Supper they usually had

¹ A water-colour by Lawreince supplements Fragonard's sketch. In this part of our history the artistic documents of the period have been followed, as they have at least the advantage of a general accuracy.

² Her brother Claude had, apparently, died, so that she was now her mother's only child. There is no reference to Claude in the life of the future Royal mistress, and if he had lived she would surely have bought him a marquisate as Madame de Pompadour had done for her " little brother."

under the great trees by the fountain ; or sometimes they and their friends formed a whole gay party and dined in a lonely pavilion. Then every night in her dreams the little white bed and the bare dormitory would vanish and she would be transported to the midst of rich and luxurious apartments.

For a long time this life continued, and Jeanne changed nothing but her friends ; she was as inconstant as any grisette, with the carelessness and, at the same time, the shrewdness of a beautiful young girl, who knows her value, and knows, too, how to wait before binding herself permanently. In the meantime her exquisite beauty, her tenderness of heart, her spirit of mischief and of roguery, her strangely mingled levity and prudence won her eager homage.

In Labille's great establishment, with its harmonies of rich colours, its marvellous laces and delicate fabrics, Jeanne was surrounded by lovely things, and her beauty-loving soul expanded like a flower under their influence. Near by lived her employer's daughter Adelaide, famous later on as Madame Labille-Guiard, the artist. The two girls had in common their blonde beauty and their keen interest in the arts ; even as a child Mademoiselle Labille had had the run of many a studio, enjoying a liberty that never overstepped the limits of perfect decorum.¹ Jeanne may have worked with Adelaide. At any rate the future academician, who early in life began to train pupils, must have noticed the most gifted of her father's employees, especially as Jeanne had learnt drawing at Sainte-Aure. This small talent of hers, and, above all, her beauty, also attracted the attention of the group of artists who frequented the Labille studio.

At that time too, old La Tour made the fresh little sketch of her, a gentle face with long blue eyes, now in the Museum of Saint-Quentin. Her youthful impressions, deepened

¹ Baron Roger Portalis, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, Paris, 1902. Adelaide Labille, who married in the same year as Madame Du Barry, exhibited for the first time in the Academy of Saint-Luc, in 1774.

later by the knowledge she acquired from Jean Du Barry, that great connoisseur and collector, account for her intelligent patronage of artists when she was the King's favourite, and for the discrimination with which she chose the most perfect works of art for her galleries.

One day Pajou, who had known her when she was with Labille, and Drouais and many others were to vie with one another in immortalising the image of the Royal mistress. It is surprising that Mme. Labille-Guiard did not follow their example. She might at least have given us the portrait of the Countess Du Barry after the latter left the Court, at the time when she herself had reached the height of her success. Pride or policy may have kept them apart, for the artist was dependent on the good graces of the Princesses, and a visit to Louveciennes might entail their displeasure and a meeting with her rival, Madame Vigée Le Brun.

When Jeanne rose to power, street-songs and caricatures were published recalling the years she spent with Labille, and making them the subject of the most outrageous calumnies. But her enemies only went against their own interests by their resort to such low weapons, for in the face of absurd exaggeration and flagrant lies the King was blind to all but the beauty and sweetness of his favourite. The Duke de Choiseul, in his memoirs, and hired pamphleteers have written of the young woman as a "vile courtesan" and a "woman of the streets." There is no longer any question of the long exploded legend placing her among the "*marcheuses*" of la Gourdan, "that infamous priestess of the pleasures of Paris,"¹ but attempts are still made to brand the Royal favourite as a common prostitute, although since the beginning of the 19th century the allegations of the Minister and the libellers are known to be baseless. Restif de la Bretonne, who considered himself a connoisseur on the subject, held them to be falsehoods²; and since then

¹ See the little known book by Sara G. (Goudar), *Remarques sur les Anecdotes de Madame la Comtesse Du Barri*, London, 1777.

² Restif de la Bretonne, *Années des Dames nationales*.

Vatel's minute examination of police reports and special registers has led to their final refutation.¹ The young girl's contemporaries would indeed have given evidence of but little taste had they allowed her to sink so low. The imagination refuses to associate the fair, dainty child, so charmingly fastidious in her attire, with the unfortunate women thrown into a waggon, and taken to Salpêtrière amid the hooting of fishwives.

Another witness is the Count d'Espinchal. Of all men of the period he was the most exactly acquainted with its every item of news, and he carefully noted the particulars of Jeanne's first steps in the career which she had chosen. At this time, when eighteen years of age, she was known as Mademoiselle Lange, and, although she bore herself modestly, "her remarkable beauty had already caught the attention of the *grands amateurs* of the capital. Monsieur de Monville, who then and after saw her frequently, has often told me how at that time she was so pretty and charming that several artists sought to have her for a model." Such a state of affairs is certainly no evidence of virtue, but on the other hand it cannot be regarded as ground for scandalous conjectures. Had it been so, Monsieur d'Espinchal could not have failed to include them among his indiscreet memories, for his whole object in life "was limited to finding out day by day all that happened in Paris," and he was "even more fully acquainted with thousands of things than the lieutenant of police."

In her nineteenth year Jeanne left Labille's establishment for the house in rue Neuve-Saint-Eustache, later rue de la Jussienne, of "a certain Count Du Barry who went by the name of the Roué, a well-known rogue and scoundrel." This Du Barry was a gentleman of Languedoc, of good manners and address, but entirely unscrupulous. He loved women, gaming and the pleasures of the table, and above

¹ The results of Vatel's investigation may be verified by reference to Monsieur Camille Piton's volume, *Paris sous Louis XV., rapports des inspecteurs de police au Roi*, 1907-8, where there is no mention of Jeanne until she appeared as the mistress of Jean Du Barry.

all he had a passion for intrigue. In a letter which he wrote to his relative Monsieur de Malheshherbes about the year 1775, after the fall of the favourite, he displays his true character with all its adroitness, subtlety and cleverly assumed sincerity :

To Monsieur de Malesherbes,
Minister and Secretary of State.

Monsieur,

. . . I shall in a few words lay before you the whole truth, and my fate depends on the impression it will make on you.

I was born a gentleman, and in good circumstances. I lived in Toulouse until twenty-eight years of age, when love of the Arts and the call of pleasure took me to Paris. Through Madame de Malausé I was presented to the Princes and introduced into good society. I spent several years solely in the pursuit of these two objects. Then the desire to improve my position and to increase my means induced me to attempt to enter the Foreign Service. Monsieur Rouillé, to whom I had been recommended by the Duke de Duras, sent me to various German courts, and on my return appeared to be fully satisfied with the knowledge I had acquired. Just when he was intending to employ me in some work in Franconia, he was replaced by Monsieur le cardinal de Bernis, who promised me much, but who, replaced in turn by Monsieur de Choiseul, fulfilled nothing. The latter having declared on his accession to the ministry that he had several claims to satisfy prior to mine, and my fortune being much impaired, Monsieur Berryer allowed me to receive under an assumed name the profits accruing from several naval contracts. Further, Monsieur de Belle-Isle permitted me to enjoy the same privilege in his department ; so that when peace was restored my fortune had attained considerable dimensions, which were maintained and even increased by the interest I had in the Corsican commissariat.

As at that time my only care was the supervision of my son's education, and being of uncertain health, I very much limited the circle of my acquaintances ; and I then asked Madame Rançon and her daughter, Mademoiselle de Vaubernier, to do the honours of my house and take charge of its

management, which they also did for several years with tact and affection. . . .

All that Jean Du Barry wrote in the above survey of his life was certainly founded on fact, but only in a general way, and without supplying the particulars which would have given it accuracy. It was true that he had been presented to the Princes by Madame de Malausc, the descendant of a bastard branch of the Bourbons. The Malauscs were connected with the Roué's mother, who bore the same name. That he was well-born is undeniable, and he came of a very old family. The *Histoire de Languedoc* records that in the year 1400 sire Jean Du Barry, chevalier, swore allegiance to his lord, the King of France, and did homage for his land at Gourville; several women of the house, too, are mentioned as abbesses in the *Gallia Christiana*. The father of the Roué, Antoine Du Barry, was captain of the regiment of l'Ile-de-France, and had been awarded the Cross of Saint Louis. Of his three sons, Elie, the youngest, had entered the Ecole Militaire in 1754, and this he could only have done by proving the purity of his blood through four generations, at least on the side of the father.

The Du Barrys asserted that they were descended from the Barrymores, who settled in England at the time of the Norman Conquest, and their claim was supported by Hozier. The armorial bearings of the two branches were indeed the same, but the French one had neither coronet, nor wolf, nor motto. However, Jean and his brother, Guillaume,¹ took the title of Count without any kind of authority. They also re-established the following coat-of-arms: Argent, three bars gemelles, gules; crest: a coronet surmounted by a castle, out of which a wolf's head, sable; supporters: two wolves, sable, ducally gorged and chained, or; motto: *Boutez en avant!* It is a far cry from this grandeur to the obscurity of the vineyard-keeper's son

¹ There were also three daughters. The eldest, nicknamed Chon, appears again in this history; Bitschi, the second, lived at Toulouse; the third, of whom there is little mention, married a gentleman living in Lévigac.

whom one of the libellers asserted the Roué to be, but his conduct, even in this age of avowed immorality, was little worthy of one who laid claim to the title of a gentleman. Jean Du Barry's life at Paris may well be imagined from the following description of him by one of his contemporaries :

Left to his own devices at an age when the passions are most powerful, he had recklessly given himself up to their indulgence. Never has a man carried further that base intemperance in debauchery which is the very refuse of love. Nor did he attempt to conceal his depravity, thus rendering it all the more hideous, and this shamelessness earned him the many evil titles that disgraced him in the eyes of society even more than the vices from which they sprang. Avaricious by temperament and prodigal by choice, all the treasures of the universe would not have been sufficient to satisfy his desires. . . . He had a powerful intellect, though endowed with acuteness and subtlety rather than with genius. . . . On a day of action or, in other words, of intrigue, it was as if new powers were given him, his spirit rose, and his fertile imagination could discover expedients where others had long since come to the end of their resources. He would make his plans with a complete grasp of all the issues involved, and in working them out would never lose the thread of the most insignificant detail.¹

Driven from the Foreign Office by Choiseul's churlish rebuff, Du Barry turned his attention to the Departments of the Army and the Navy, and succeeded in amassing a fortune through his connection with the commissariats, especially at the time of the Corsican expedition. When engaged in this type of intrigue he did not hesitate to enlist the services of Julie, Madame de Grammont's first lady's maid, to avert the suspicions of Choiseul. Nor was this the only form of speculation in which he indulged ; his activities in other directions were attended by equally lucrative results. When Madame de Pompadour was in power he tried, though without success, to introduce into the Royal seraglio the beautiful Dorothy, a Strasburg

¹ Sara Goudar, *Remarques sur les Anecdotes*.

water-carrier's daughter, hoping thereby to earn his nomination at Cologne. About the same time he offered Richelieu a certain Demoiselle Martin, whom the Marshal, used to such affairs, chose to regard as a very shrine of innocence. The character of the Roué appears still more odious in the light of these shameful dealings, and that he actually drove such a traffic has been abundantly proved by serious contemporary evidence. The Journal of Monsieur de Sartines' Inspectors states that the Roué had seduced many pretty girls, up to the day on which he met Jeanne.

The Count first came to be acquainted with Rançon and his family through his interest in the Corsican commissariat. He soon had the former sent to Fresnay in the Maine as a collector of taxes, and Jeanne and her mother he took into his house, where they were "to do the honours and take charge of its management." He was deeply enamoured of his new mistress, and surrounded her with the most tender care. She was then known by a name scarcely masking that of her supposed father, Vaubernier. The police inspectors observed on December 14, 1764, the appearance of a "young woman of nineteen years, of noble bearing and the greatest beauty"; it was "demoiselle Beauvarnier, mistress of Du Barry, who brought her to his box at the opera."

Her "noble bearing," which had been noticed by simple police officers, attracted the attention of more experienced judges. One evening Jeanne appeared at the Opera Ball "unmasked, and dressed all in white," and Monsieur d'Espinchal adds: "In all my life I have never seen anything more charming than this divine creature; she was Hebe; she was one of the Graces. Voltaire's description of Agnes Sorel would have fitted her to perfection:

*Jamais l'Amour ne forma rien de tel;
Elle avait tout; elle aurait dans ses chaînes
Mis les héros, les sages et les rois. . . .*

Which was exactly what she was eager to do, and when she succeeded the philosopher of Ferney could judge her worthy only of the gods.

At the rue de la Jussienne Jeanne kept open house, had

a large staff of servants, and gave herself up to the art of pleasing the many agreeable acquaintances Du Barry had introduced to her. His name and fortune opened the doors of the nobility to him, but he preferred the brilliant, though mixed world of letters. Through his friend Favier both he and Jeanne had come to know Mademoiselle Legrand, the most famous blue-stocking of the period, and a woman whom for intellect and caustic wit Du Mouriez in his *Mémoires* compares to Ninon de L'Enclos. At her house they met such men as the younger Crébillon, Collé, and the Count de Guibert, and freedom of manner and thought was the order of the day in this gay world of critics and of savants. Crébillon, with an unexpected air of modesty, would join issue with Collé, readiest and most brilliant of talkers, in as dazzling a display of verbal fencing, with thrust and parry of epigram, witty retort and quick repartee, as a spirit of mockery, that was no respecter of things and persons, could call forth. In his hôtel the Roué brought together for his mistress "a little circle of learned men, the Abbé Arnaud, Marin, Turpin, La Morlière and some others, who kept her in touch with the literature of the period, and taught her to trifle with philosophy." Du Barry also received the poets Robbé and Cailhava and old Moncrif. In such surroundings, where the libertinism of the age appeared in its most attractive light, her intercourse with these "intellectuals" gave her refinement and culture, adding to her natural good sense all the elegance of scepticism and all the graces of learning.

Her pliant nature found its chief delight in acquiring the grand manners of the people of quality whom Du Barry entertained in large numbers; among them were such great noblemen as the Duke de Duras and the Duke de Richelieu, to whom the house offered attractions other than those of its art treasures. They had the opportunity of hearing Robbé tell his licentious tales; they could witness the representation of the so-called *proverbes*, then coming into fashion, and in which the marvellous actor Goy appeared, who was known as "milord Goy" for his extra-

ordinary power of mimicking the English.¹ At the brilliant suppers over which his mistress presided, Du Barry would bring together with men of letters such men as the Marquis d'Arcambal, commanding officer in Corsica, the Count de Thiard, first Lord-in-waiting to the Duke d'Orléans, his brother the Count de Bissy, both Lieutenant-Generals and the latter a Member of the Academy, the Marquis Phillippe de la Tour-du-Pin, and his brother Count Louis, chamberlain to the Duke d'Orléans. In this elegant and distinguished society Jeanne's natural qualities and refinement were developed and soon won recognition.

Equally select was the society with which she came into contact in the house of the Countess La Rena, who lived at the hôtel du Pérou, rue Jacob, and with whom she was soon on intimate terms. For seven years the beautiful Italian had been the mistress of William Douglas, third Earl of March, an accomplished gentleman and a leader of London fashion; his pride of bearing was rivalled only by that of Richelieu, who was at all times *le grand seigneur*, "even when he most aimed at playing the part." This same Lord March afterwards, when Duke of Queensberry, presented Louis XV.'s former favourite to the King of England, but at the time in question he was completely under the rule of his "genteel passion." "I have for her," he wrote, "the most sincere friendship and affection. I have always given her in the past, and shall always continue to give her my regard and respect. Nothing would induce me to cause her the smallest anxiety, for indeed I love her very dearly." The Countess La Rena was often in Paris, and her intimacy with Mademoiselle de Vaubernier indicates to what light, though polished, society the latter was becoming accustomed. Jeanne in her turn received her friend at the Roué's house, and Madame La Rena wrote in December, 1766, to Lord William, who had remained in London, "Monsieur Du Barry is charming, he has given us balls where we can meet Princesses."

¹ *Correspondance littéraire*, ed. Tourneux, Vol. IX., p. 262, where he is spoken of as "milor Gor."

Neither with Douglas nor with the Duke de Duras did Jeanne deceive the Count. But otherwise she had only to choose, for, in the words of a contemporary account, "this demoiselle is very beautiful, and all our gallants of high rank pay her assiduous court." Among the crowd of admirers the brilliant Count Fitz-James probably caught her fickle fancy; it is at least certain that Richelieu enjoyed her favour. Later the Marshal undertook to extol her beauty to his monarch, who was hesitating in his choice of a new mistress, and Louis XV. wrote to Choiseul: "Richelieu has been her only lover"; with what sincerity we cannot tell. Public opinion, however, ascribes that position both to the financier Sainte-Foy and the one-armed Viscount de Boisgelin, but how many others have not been included? The police reports with their usual generosity have swelled the list and stigmatised Du Barry's "infamous" acquiescence. At all events, Jean was not in the least jealous, and the relations between them remained unchanged.¹

They were further united by their common interest in the Roué's son, Adolphe, a page in the Royal Household and, at the age of sixteen, an officer in the Guards. He was a gentle, delicate child, and he must certainly have preferred to his strange father the woman who surrounded him with loving care. His charming disposition had won him general esteem at Court, and the tenderness with which the affectionate Jeanne regarded her young Royal Lieutenant may be imagined. Their little love-story and its tragic end have not been touched by the libellers, except by the author of the *Gazetier cuirassé* in a page full of obscenities. Yet the Viscount was always at her side, and she used to lean on him for advice and support, as the following incident seems to indicate. It is taken from the police report:—

On Tuesday, May 12, 1767, at ten o'clock in the evening, there appeared before us, etc., Jeanne Dame de Vaubernier, wife (*sic*) of messire Jean, Count Du Barry, resident in Paris,

¹ See Piton, *Paris sous Louis XV.* In December, 1765, and January, 1766, Jeanne is supposed to have left the Roué for some unknown reason, and lived alone at rue Montmartre.

rue de la Jussienne, who complained to us of the woman Etienne, sempstress, of rue de Cléry, and said that about a week ago she had sent some muslin to the said woman Etienne for the purpose of having it made up into gowns and petticoats and other garments, which the said woman Etienne was to have brought back a few days later ; that to-day, being tired of waiting for the clothes which she required in the country, she sent her servants one after the other to the said woman Etienne and, not receiving any satisfactory reply, she finally besought the Count [Viscount] Du Barry, her relative and an officer in the Royal Regiment, to go himself ; that the said woman Etienne abused the said Count Du Barry, and formally refused to give up the said clothes under the pretext that they were not finished ; that the said Count Du Barry offered in vain to pay for the said clothes as if they were finished, provided she gave them up as they were, but the woman continued to refuse with the greatest obstinacy, and she even went so far as to insult the said Count Du Barry in a tone of violence. . . .

As Monsieur d'Espinchal also bears witness, Jeanne had already taken the title of Countess Du Barry, which was legitimately hers when she came to Versailles after she had married Jean's brother Guillaume. But, although she then severed her connection with the rest of the family, she would not be parted from Adolphe ; he attended all the Royal functions, through her influence he was made His Majesty's chief equerry, and she secured him a dowry on his marriage with Mademoiselle de Tournon. Such, then, were her surroundings before she came to Court. They seemed as if made to refine her to the utmost, and the Roué was right when he smilingly and shrewdly remarked, "She is fit for a king."

The Duke de Choiseul himself put the young woman in the way of her fortune. Du Barry had ceded his interest in the Corsican commissariat to Madame Rançon and her daughter, and for some time they enjoyed the benefit of it ; but "Monsieur de Choiseul's new regulations being likely to deprive them of it, they went to him to petition for its continuance, and it was on one of the many visits to Versailles

that this entailed that Mademoiselle de Vaubernier first attracted the attention of Louis XV.”¹

The Palace was always easy of access to visitors, and if only one were decently clad it was quite possible to wander through the Royal apartments, and to behold his Majesty and the Royal Family dine in public. Jeanne, on leaving the office of Foulon, the Superintendent of Finance, used to go to the Chateau, and thus found herself, no doubt purposely, in the path of her sovereign, who could not fail to notice the dazzling apparition. “Monsieur Lebel,” wrote Du Barry to Malesherbes, “was given his orders; and he, with whom neither she nor I had any connection, carried them out without referring to me at all.” In the spring of 1768, Jeanne was introduced to the King by his old valet-de-chambre.

This version of the origin of the Royal *liaison* agrees in the main with that given by Choiseul in his memoirs. The Duke apologises himself for his embittered pages when he confesses to having written the story of his exile “in the heat of the moment.” If his account makes out those directly responsible for his disgrace to be monsters of malice and baseness, it is unlikely that the favourite would escape similar treatment at his hands.

In 1768, some time before the Court went to Compiègne, one of my friends wrote to beg me to receive a woman in whom several people were interested, and who desired to ask a favour of me. I was in Paris, and said I would see her the following day; she came and appeared to me only fairly good-looking, while her awkwardness and air of constraint gave me the impression of a woman bred in the country. Nor was this opinion altered by the business on which she came. She told me that she had trusted a certain Nallet with the whole of her somewhat insignificant fortune, and as he had formerly been contractor for the provisions of the seven battalions in Corsica, she besought me to reserve an interest for him in the administration of

¹ The Roué's account has been followed here, as on this occasion he does not seem to have had anything to gain by concealing the truth.

the supplies for the eighteen battalions now to be sent there. I gently represented to her the impossibility of changing in her favour a general arrangement, and said that Nallet had done very well for those seven battalions, but that I doubted whether he was capable of undertaking a larger work. As she continued to insist in a manner as indecorous as it was stupid I got rid of her by advising her to turn to Monsieur Foulon, who was responsible for these details.¹

At first Jeanne's relations with Louis XV. were almost unnoticed; they were discreetly ignored on account of Marie Leczinska's death at Versailles on June 24. After the funeral obsequies the King went to Marly and then to Compiègne. "I happened," wrote Choiseul, "not to be there the first few days. The day after my arrival Monsieur de Saint-Florentin came and told me that there was at Compiègne a Madame Du Barry whom the King visited, with whom he passed the night, and with whom he was said to be deeply in love; he added that this Madame Du Barry was a girl to whom Du Barry, the Roué, had given his name, a brilliant retinue and powdered lackeys, and that he said he had married her to one of his brothers. . . ." The two ministers discussed the matter, and deplored the choice of their master. "Besides, we thought that such a low intrigue could have no other consequences than those of a momentary fancy; we hoped between ourselves that the King would behave better in the future, and that this would be the last indulgence of his taste, of which we were aware, for bad company."

Jeanne did not marry Guillaume Du Barry until September 1, though the civil contract was drawn up previously on

¹ According to Talleyrand, the Roué, before he presented his mistress to the King, had thought of marrying her to Nallet (called Nallu by Choiseul's editors), after which Lebel would get Nallet a post as farmer-general. Evidently the Roué had several strings to his bow; by some means or other he intended to derive benefit from Jeanne's future. We may disregard Choiseul's accusations of "awkwardness" and "stupidity" in the pretty petitioner, as well as the low means of persuasion he alleged she employed. At least he confirms the Roué's account of the fortuitous circumstances which brought Jeanne to the King's notice.

July 23 by Maître Garnier-Deschênes, a Paris notary. The marriage had been arranged by the Roué to give the lady position and title, and Guillaume, an obscure provincial captain, was delighted at the windfall, and hastened to the side of his brother. As the father, Antoine Du Barry, was dead, a power of attorney was obtained from his widow, Dame Cathérine de Lacaze, who gave her consent on condition that the union was consecrated with canonical rites.

This contract exhibits with unequalled audacity the lies and pretensions of Jean Du Barry. Among those who appeared before the notaries of the Châtelet were "Nicolas Rançon, in the service of the government, and Dame Anne Bécu his wife . . . the said dame formerly *the widow of Jean Jacques Gomard de Vaubernier, in the service of the government, contracting on behalf of Mademoiselle Jeanne Gomard de Vaubernier, a minor, daughter of the said Dame Rançon and of the said late Gomard de Vaubernier, her first husband.*"

The Roué seems to have vented all his malice in this parody of a contract :—

ARTICLE 1.—There shall be no community of goods between the said Seigneur and the Demoiselle his future wife, herein running counter to the custom of Paris or of any other place. . . . on the contrary the said Demoiselle shall alone enjoy and administer the property, rights and shares, movable and immovable, which are hers, and which may become hers under whatsoever title.

ARTICLE 2.—. . . Her movables consist of the sum of 30,000 livres, composed of jewels, diamonds, dresses, linen, lace and household goods in her use, the whole derived *from her gains and savings*, and of which an inventory has been made. . . .

ARTICLE 5.—The said Seigneur and future husband has settled on the Demoiselle and future wife 1,000 livres in yearly income, the capital of which laid out at 4 per cent. interest shall belong to the children to be born of the marriage. . . .

ARTICLE 7.—It is agreed that the said Demoiselle and

future wife shall alone undertake the conduct and expenses of the household, whether of food, rent, wages, table-linen, household utensils, maintenance of equipage, etc., and all other expenses without exception, those for the said Seigneur and future husband as well as those for the children to be born of the marriage, whom she must bring up and educate at her own expense. . . .¹

As a matter of fact, actual falsification only took place at the religious celebration of the marriage. The bride was made younger by three years, and was asserted to be the issue of the marriage of Anne Bécu and Jean-Jacques Gormard de Vaubernier, an imaginary person supposed to have died in 1749. On September 1, 1768, in the church of Saint-Laurent, at five o'clock in the morning, the ceremony took place, at which the former "frère Ange," now invested with the high-sounding title of King's Almoner, alone represented the family of the bride.

It amused the Roué to complicate matters; he cheated at the new game for pleasure, sure of impunity, although a severe law was directed against these frauds. There were various precedents to encourage him. Had he not seen, on the occasion of a recent marriage, another bride and Royal mistress, the lovely Morphise, call herself O'Murphy de Ballimore de Boisfaily? Besides, it was worth taking some trouble to gain the end in view, and though he may have expected rather more from his enterprise, at least he had the satisfaction of having performed his work well. His retinue of scribblers and adventurers were by no means niggardly with their compliments, and even those who most condemned his cynicism were able to write: "If attention is directed to the great changes he has brought about, to the lowly position from which he started, to the wheels he could set in motion and to the means he employed, if the prejudices he has vanquished and the obstacles he has

¹ This contract was first published in 1859 by J.-A. Le Roi, and is to be found in his *Curiosités historiques*, Paris, 1864. The intentional inexactitudes which give it its fraudulent character have been italicised.

overcome are considered, one cannot deny that he possessed talent of some description."¹

Madame Du Barry, when once at Court, knew how to get rid of her trying mentor ; clever in her turn she discarded him gracefully. He had helped her to attain her exalted position, but her own personal qualities were enough to make it secure. In the meantime, he took the final arrangements in hand ; he sent the nominal husband back to Languedoc immediately after the ceremony ; he paid for the dresses and jewels, ordered the livery, the coach, and a very beautiful sedan-chair on which he had the arms of the Du Barrys painted, quartering on them those of the Gomards de Vaubernier, as blazoned by some chance herald he had come across : azure, a chevron or, bearing a jay surmounted by the letter G ; two roses in point, a dexter hand in pale, all argent.

Thus provided for, and in a position to do her new family credit, the young Countess left for Fontainebleau, where the Court had just arrived. At Compiègne she had resided in a private house, but now the King had her live with him in the Château ; and Monsieur de Mercy, Ambassador of the Austrian Empire, in his astonishment at the serious turn events had taken, thought it his duty to write to his Cabinet : " My lady is lodged in the Court known as ' Les Fontaines ' in the apartment next to that which Madame de Pompadour had occupied ; she has numerous servants, her liveries are resplendent, and on Sundays and holidays she may be seen at Mass in one of the chapels of the *rez-de-chaussée* reserved for the King. Such treatment, so different from that suitable to a simple girl, is daily attracting more attention from the courtiers. . . ."² Courtiers and ambassadors were to be still further surprised.

¹ Sara Goudar, *Remarques sur les Anecdotes*, etc.

² *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'empereur Joseph II. et le prince de Kaunitz*, Paris, D'Arneth and Flammermont, 1891.

CHAPTER II

JEANNE AT COURT

Pamphlets against the New Favourite—Hostility of the Choiseuls—Animosity of "Mesdames"—The "Barriens"—The Presentation—The Gift of the Château of Louveciennes—The Favourite's increasing Influence—The Salon of the Louvre in 1769—The Marriage of the Dauphin.

THE King had given his favourite a suite of apartments at Fontainebleau, and he could do no less at Versailles. When the Court returned in December, 1768, six rooms in the chapel wing of the Chateau were assigned to her, which were temporarily unoccupied owing to the death in August of the old valet Lebel. She rented an hôtel in the rue de l'Orangerie for her suite, where she could also receive visitors, for though Jean Du Barry had disappeared, their former friends still came to see her. The men of letters and the "intellectuals" in particular continued to visit her, and the Prince de Ligne speaks of having heard Robbé recite his wanton verses at her house. "I often met him at supper there, before Madame Du Barry's presentation," he wrote; "she used to be exceedingly diverted by his folly in believing himself the owner of the smallest foot in France."¹

Cailhava was another poet whom she certainly received, for he composed in her honour his *Etrennes de l'Amour*, a ballet which was performed early in 1769 by the Comédie Italienne. It is a scarcely veiled allegory presenting "the ornament of the Court" in the guise of a Hebe, fair as one of the Graces. In the copy he gave her he wrote the following dedication:

¹ Prince de Ligne, *Mémoires et mélanges historiques*, Paris, 1827-8, Vol. IV., p. 53.

Transporté par un songe au haut de l'Empyrée,
 J'ai cru voir cette nuit la belle Cythérée,
 L'aimable Hébé, le Dieu qu'invoquent les amants,
 La tendre Volupté, les Graces, les Talents,
 Qui d'un air satisfait parcouraient mon ouvrage.
 Un sourire flatteur m'annonçait leur suffrage ;
 J'ai redouté leur fuite à l'instant du réveil,
 Mais je les vois encor, ce n'est pas un mensonge,
 Un seul de vos regards réalise mon songe,
 Et j'étais moins heureux dans les bras du Sommeil.

These verses were the first to celebrate the new divinity. It was said that she adopted as her own the witticisms of others. A letter, supposed to be by her hand, appeared in an English journal, but it was in reality written by Claire-Françoise Du Barry, nicknamed "Chon." Marmontel, the editor of the *Mercur*e, printed it in his paper, announcing it as follows : " I hasten to publish this letter as containing a high lesson of virtue, and as a rare piece of eloquence." This was high praise ; for, although Mademoiselle Du Barry was not without certain literary merits, she was more notable for her intelligence than for her talents as a writer. The Countess soon recognised her qualities, and when in any difficulty would turn to her for advice. Mademoiselle Chon generously put at the service of her friends the ascendancy she thus obtained over the young favourite. For instance, she brought about the recall of La Beaumelle, who had been exiled from Paris by Madame de Pompadour. She was " if not on the best of terms with him, at least on the *next* best." In the tender, hurried little notes that she sent him, she recommended him to write the favourite thousands of compliments, which she would undertake to read to her, perhaps even in the presence of the King. And the audacious girl actually carried out her plan one day, when she recited before amused Royalty these verses :

Amour, lassé d'être bizarre,
 Veut réunir enfin, par un coup qui surprend,
 Ce que l'Europe a de plus rare :
 Des femmes la plus belle et des rois le plus grand.
 Son choix est bientôt fait et sa main se dépêche,
 Aux yeux des peuples éblouis
 De blesser de la même flèche
 Les cœurs de Jeanne et de Louis.

The increasing conspicuousness of her position brought the Countess attacks as well as homage, and the former, as the latter, first arose in high places ; but soon, when the amours of the King had become public property, they were sung in every street-corner. Certain pamphlets, passed by the Lieutenant of Police, showed an unheard-of audacity. In January, 1769, for instance, the *Brevet d'apprentissage d'une jeune fille de modes* appeared, a venomous little poem in which the heroine's aunt is given the name of " La Babilie," which bears a sufficient resemblance to Labille. At the same time a wretched novel was printed, the history of a depraved peasant girl, written by herself and entitled *Vie de la Bourbonnoise* ; in this the authors introduced the apocryphal anecdotes against Madame Du Barry, which were so sedulously repeated by many other libellers. The book, whose title was in itself a direct allusion, had a considerable vogue, and was more than once adapted for the stage ; but the songs alone could popularise the malevolent legend, and it was not long before the first couplets of *La Bourbonnoise* were in general circulation :

La Bourbonnoise
Arrivant à Paris
A gagné des louis.
La Bourbonnoise
A gagné des louis
Chez un marquis.

De paysanne
Elle est Dame à present,
Mais grosse Dame,
Porte des falbalas
Du haut en bas.

Elle est allée
Se faire voir en Cour ;
Elle est allée ;
On dit qu'elle a, ma foi,
Plu même au Roi ! . . .

Several editions of *La Bourbonnoise* were published " in order to satisfy the public appetite ; this vaudeville soon became as fashionable as the little puppets which every

woman had to carry in her pocket.”¹ Of the variants known “the most piquant and naïve” began as follows :

Quelle merveille
Une fille de rien.
Quelle merveille
Donne au Roi de l'Amour,
Est à la Cour.

The song is frankly obscene, and when it is borne in mind that the most “naïve” of these couplets were perhaps composed by very great ladies, the intensity of the anger roused by the presence of the new mistress at Versailles may be more clearly estimated.

The *Apothéose du Roi Pétaud*, a rhymed tale circulated clandestinely, was aimed directly against the King, but was perhaps of not so low a type of literature :

Il vous souvient encor de cette Tour de Nesle.
Tivinmille, Lymal, Rouxchâteau, Papomdour ;
Mais, dans la foule enfin de peut-être cent belles
Qu'il honora de son amour,
Vous distinguez, je crois, celle qu'à notre Cour
On soutenait n'avoir jamais été cruelle. . . .
Qui dans Paris ne connut ses appas ?
De laquais au marquis chacun se souvient d'elle. . .²

Madame Du Barry had the good taste to pretend that she smiled at all these insults, but Louis XV. suffered in his love, as in his pride. Since she whom he had chosen was shamelessly and remorselessly attacked, he became all the more attached to the heedless child, as much out of defiance and chivalry as out of tenderness. His pretty favourite enchanted him ; she was docile, tender, joyous and indulgent in turn, compliant to his every wish. In her fresh presence, in the atmosphere of her youth and gaiety, the sovereign's melancholy melted away. He meant to have her presented

¹ Sara Goudar, *Remarques sur les Anecdotes*. The author quotes in connection with these couplets the saying of a courtier : “I thought Choiseul's party would get the upper hand ; but since Madame Du Barry is lampooned in Paris, her position at Versailles is secure.”

² The tale was attributed to Voltaire, some of his lines having been cleverly introduced into it.

as soon as possible so that she might be beside him in his coach, and always with him at all Court functions. But many difficulties were to arise and oppose his wishes.

Mesdames de France, the King's daughters, were bitterly opposed to the favourite. Madame Adelaide had indeed declared that it "would be better to support her than to run the risk of having a queen," but she changed her mind on the advice of her counsellors. As the Princesses were not in a position to hear the more shameless of the rhymes about the Countess, others better suited to their ears were composed. These were ascribed to the Duke de Nivernais and the Abbé de Lattaignan, but they were very likely written by Boufflers, an intimate friend of Choiseul :

Lisette, ta beauté séduit
Et charme tout le monde ;
En vain la duchesse en rougit
Et la princesse en gronde ;
Chacun sait que Vénus naquit
De l'écume de l'onde.

En vit-elle moins tous les dieux
Lui rendre un juste hommage,
Et Pâris, ce berger fameux,
Lui donner l'avantage
Même sur la reine des cieux
Et Minerve la Sage ?

Dans le sérail du Grand Seigneur
Quelle est la favorite ?
C'est la plus belle au gré du cœur
Du maître qui l'habite ;
C'est le seul titre à sa faveur,
Et c'est le vrai mérite.

The Princesses, having been informed of all the circumstances of the new *liaison*, were quite prepared to listen to the interested opinions of the Austrian Ambassador, the Count de Mercy-Argenteau. He hinted at "the importance . . . to the fame of the King of a second marriage, through which he would be led to abandon his disorderly life." The Archduchess Elizabeth, a daughter of Maria Theresa, desired nothing more than to marry him, and such a union had already been proposed at the time of Marie

Leczinska's death. But then Monsieur de Choiseul, and above all his sister the Duchess de Grammont, had feared the advent of a queen, "wise and lovable, who would succeed in winning the love of her husband," and who would gain influence over him at their expense.

Convinced that by no other means could the King be made to give up his evil ways, the Princesses "had been most pressing in their entreaties that he should give them a queen, and that his choice should fall on the Archduchess ; at first the King had answered them with hesitation and some embarrassment ; but then his tone became more affectionate, and he told them that, taking into account his age and his circumstances, a second marriage could not be wholly advantageous ; that he had however considered the matter, and that the ardent desire Mesdames had evinced in this respect had influenced his determination . . . that he would sue for the hand of the Archduchess provided her appearance were not displeasing to him." Mesdames instantly suggested sending an artist to Vienna to paint Elizabeth's portrait, and the King consented to let Ducreux go for that purpose.¹

But the moment he again saw his mistress he forgot all his promises and his daughters' grief, not to speak of the feelings of the Austrian Cabinet ; one thing only occupied his mind, the presentation of the favourite and the means of bringing it about. The Baroness de Montmorency agreed to chaperone "the creature," as her enemies called her, "requiring in return ready money and many favours" ; but her demands were too high, and her offer was declined. The Duchess d'Aiguillon, in spite of her intimacy with Madame Du Barry, refused to play the part of sponsor, but she induced the Countess de Béarn, an impoverished relative from the provinces, to undertake the task in her place.

¹ Drouais had at first been proposed, but he valued his services too highly. Ducreux arrived in Vienna the following February, and painted the portraits of most of the Imperial family, his real object being to bring back to Versailles the portrait of Marie Antoinette.

The Princesses, on hearing of these preparations, gave up "in despair" all hope of their father's marriage. Choiseul alone remained confident, and planned to supplant the Countess by throwing into the arms of the monarch a delightful little Madame Millin, "the young and charming wife of a physician," according to a contemporary; "but although she is very pretty, she is not so beautiful as the favourite; no one wishes Monsieur de Choiseul success in this affair, for the King is too much in love."¹

His Majesty announced to his Cabinet that the presentation would take place on January 25. He promised to pay the debts of the Count de Béarn's widow and to protect her two sons, who were officers, one in the Cavalry, the other in the Navy. Richelieu, who was the First Lord-in-Waiting of that year, ordered her Court-dress; Marigny, the Director of the Office of Works, gave orders for the repair of the apartments formerly occupied by Madame de Pompadour in the palaces of Marly, Choisy and Bellevue, and for "the re-opening of all communications between them and those of the King." The attractive, intellectual Marquise Du Deffand, who was all for Choiseul, wrote on the 24th to her friend Horace Walpole: "They say that to-morrow is the day when a petticoat will perhaps determine the destinies of Europe. . . . No, no, I cannot believe in all that they foresee! . . . One may overcome the greatest obstacles and in the end be held back by shame . . ."² Shame did in fact hold back Madame de Béarn; on all sides she encountered such black looks that on January 25 she most conveniently sprained her ankle, and was forced to keep her room.

Then what rejoicings among Choiseul's supporters, what consternation among the "*Barriens*"! But the game was only drawn, not won. The King, wishing to win back his daughters, sent them Monsieur de La Vauguyon, tutor to the Royal Family and Choiseul's open enemy. He came to

¹ Belleval, *Souvenirs d'un cheval-léger*, p. 118.

² Madame Du Deffand's letters to Horace Walpole, ed. Lescure, Vol. I., p. 530. The letter quoted is by mistake dated the 14th.



LOUIS XV
Engraved by Bonnet from the painting by Vanloo

hold forth to them on the respect due to paternal authority, but was very ill received by Madame Adelaide, who turned her back on him and refused to listen. The story of the scene spread through the Court, and details were added to taste. "The cabal of Madame Du Barry has for some time been very obviously under a cloud," wrote Mercy to the Prince de Kaunitz; "Monsieur de La Vauguyon, who is the head of it, is quite disgraced."

But as yet the favourite feared nothing; she trusted in the affection of the King. Whilst Richelieu, La Vauguyon, Saint-Florentin were bestirring themselves, Adolphe Du Barry, more congenial to her light-hearted nature, came every day to amuse her. He felt that he lived only when in her adored presence, and sometimes she was kind to him, and the happiness of former days was his again. Youth triumphs over all, and at twenty love could scarcely make him jealous of the rights of His Majesty; that he was still allowed the dear joy of her tender mockery was sufficient to inspire him with gratitude to Fate.

Though the mistress was little troubled by the indignation of the Princesses and the tumult her presence had raised, an accident to the King seriously disturbed her composure. On February 4, when hunting in the forest of Saint-Germain, he fell from his horse and injured his arm so badly that it was feared at first he had broken it. He was carried on a stretcher to his coach, and did not return to Versailles until eight o'clock in the evening. The agitation of the Court may be imagined, the anxiety of the Princesses, the emotion of Madame Du Barry. Sénac, the physician in ordinary, having bled the invalid, cried from the window to the crowd which had collected that there was no danger. And the good people, remembering that Louis had once been the "Well-Beloved," replied with "Long live the King!"

The next day the monarch was present at his council, and on February 8 he received the Ash Wednesday blessing from the hands of the Archbishop of Rheims. But three days later the contusion spread, and he was obliged to keep his room. The favourite saw him no more; Richelieu

dared not introduce her, for the Princesses, often accompanied by "*les petites Mesdames*," Clotilde and Elizabeth, would not quit the Royal bedside. In this domestic intimacy they regained their ascendancy over their father, and the question of the marriage was once more brought forward. He even spoke of having Madame Adelaide's apartment put in order for the future queen. But none could fathom the inmost thoughts of this timid, fugitive, elusive soul. The moment his convalescence began he hastened to send for Madame Du Barry.

All the correspondence of the period mentions the two possibilities. They may be followed in the letters, hitherto unpublished, of a sensible, independent woman, who at that moment was deeply concerned to have the exactest information. Madame Denis, then at Paris, kept her uncle, Voltaire, in touch with the smallest events at Court. She wrote to him on March 8, 1769 :

Monsieur de Choiseul is still in the same position ; but he has gained time, and that is much. He has time to change his mind. My lady is not yet presented, and the King has kept back nine or ten other women who are waiting. However, it is generally supposed that she will be. They say she is gay and good-natured ; and if others were not backing her, there would probably be nothing to which to object, but . . . I hope that the Duke will make a move towards a reconciliation with her. The King has continual pain in his arm, he cannot raise it, he cannot sign his name, the fall was more serious than any one thought. . . . I have already told you that he had taken Madame's apartment in order to make his own and that of Madame Du Barry larger. He still loves her with the same passion.

The mistress lived for some days in terrible anxiety, and as soon as the King returned to her she besought him with every loving protestation to spare her such torments in future, and allow her to be presented. As her lover he consoled her, and as her sovereign he gave his solemn promise. " I reopen my letter, my dear friend," wrote Madame Denis to Voltaire on March 26, " to tell you that some widow from

the provinces whose name I cannot in the least remember, will be presented on Palm Sunday, and that she will then present Madame Du Barry on the Sunday after Easter; she is a second Madame d'Estrade.¹ I am sure of the authenticity of this news."

The month of March was entirely devoted to the preparations for the marriage of the Duke de Chartres to Mademoiselle de Penthièvre. Nothing further opposed the King's plans, and, having come to an agreement with Richelieu, he announced on the evening of April 21 that the following day one single presentation would take place, that of Madame Du Barry.

The ceremony roused curiosity not only at Court, but also in the salons of Paris and in diplomatic circles. Louis had made his decision in order to destroy the hopes of the Austrian Cabinet. The Count de Mercy wrote with obvious disappointment to Chancellor Kaunitz: "I find it no less disgraceful that a Marshal de Richelieu, a Tutor and a Governess to the Royal children, should lend themselves to such a base intrigue, and that Madame De Marsan and Monsieur de La Vauguyon, who had made so much show of their piety, should publicly say that God permits an evil in order to prevent a greater one, that greater evil being according to them the existence of their enemy, Monsieur de Choiseul."

The tense situation had indeed lasted too long. During the months of expectation passions had been roused, and bitter hatreds had sprung up, while the mire of ever-growing scandal had swallowed up yet more of the prestige and authority of royalty. The *Gazette de France*, the official organ of the Court, recorded the great news: "On the 22nd of this month (April, 1769) the Countess Du Barry had the honour of being presented to the King and the Royal Family by the Countess de Béarn."

Thus was the door opened for Jeanne's entry on to the

¹ Madame d'Estrade had presented Madame de Pompadour under somewhat similar circumstances, better known to Voltaire than to any one.

stage of History, to play what many called her tragic part. But tragedy suited her ill. Hers was a nature softly feminine, pliant and impressionable ; her mind could never stifle the promptings of her heart, nor could her heart but be the servant of her soul. With her light-hearted, careless grace, the exquisite girl was far more akin to one of the younger Crébillon's heroines than to La Merteuil of the *Liaisons*, to whom love was but "a string of experiences on which to reflect at leisure." She was, moreover, always herself. Her instincts had grown like the fair flowers of the field, though not unmixed with tares. In spite of the influence of an age when affectation flourished, Rousseau himself could not have dreamt of a Sophie more natural than she. And if she sometimes rouged her cheeks and powdered her hair, at least there was nothing counterfeit about her soul. The court was steeped in artificiality, and into its atmosphere of self-interest, intrigue and lies came frank Jeanne Du Barry, a goddess without shame, no doubt, but above all a goddess of truth. Her engaging simplicity kept her from being dazzled by the amazing good fortune which had made her life a fairy tale. With magnificent serenity she mounted queen-like the grand staircase at Versailles. Her vitality, her vibrant youth were to Louis XV. the sources whence he drew a new delight in life.

On Sunday, the day after the presentation, Madame Du Barry, in full dress and wearing all the diamonds of the previous evening, attended the King's Mass. She occupied the seat in the chapel which had formerly been Madame de Pompadour's. Louis XV. sat with his eyes fixed on his mistress ; he still carried his arm in a sling and he crossed himself repeatedly with his left hand. Several bishops were observed in His Majesty's suite ; they seemed to have come for the purpose of paying court to the favourite, the irony of fate having decreed that the clerical party should centre their hopes in her.

After divine service the Countess, now admitted to the table of Mesdames and the Dauphin, solemnly entered on her official duties. If circumstances allowed, she was on

the way to becoming the first power in the kingdom. An avowed mistress had already intervened in State affairs, created and dismissed ministries, made nominations to the War Office, given orders for the Office of Works and Public Buildings. In Madame de Pompadour's time every petition, every request had to be submitted to her before being presented to the King ; her power to issue *lettres-de-cachet* was almost unlimited, and only her own creatures were at all in favour. Would the Countess Du Barry acquire the same authority, would she in her turn hold the reins of government ? Such were the questions eagerly discussed among the courtiers, by some with curiosity, with anxiety by others.

Calmer of all was Monsieur de Choiseul, whose power then knew no bounds. He directed Foreign affairs, and the Army, and, through his cousin Praslin, the Navy too ; he was superintendent of the Post, and Governor of Touraine ; governor also of the hospital of Les Invalides, and colonel of the Swiss and Grison regiments. His work had never been difficult to him, and by its fortunate outcome he had won the confidence of his sovereign. To him in part the kingdom owed the restoration of the Navy, the acquisition of Corsica, and, in spite of the war, the firm position of France after the Treaty of the Quadruple Alliance and the Family Pact, which had at least strengthened the bonds uniting the House of Bourbon.

Chance had given his genius scope, and, as his enthusiastic admirers allowed, his faith in himself had proved a valuable support. But " he was by no means equal to the image of him that one had formed," wrote Sénac de Meilhan, " and the memoirs he wrote leave little doubt as to this." The Barriens could indeed accuse him of pettinesses, unworthy of a man of his powers ; but perhaps these could be traced to the influence exerted over him by his sister Béatrix, Duchess de Grammont, who was for ever fanning his hatred of the new mistress.

The minister felt that behind the favourite was the Richelieu-La Vauguyon faction, that had sworn his downfall.

When Madame de Pompadour died, his enemies had sought to further their own ends by giving the King the frivolous d'Esparbès, who had seemed to please his fancy. Even while the Marquise still lived the King had been attracted by the wayward grace of the little Countess. She was a fragile little being, red-haired and azure-eyed, and very short-sighted, but she had the most lovely hands, and when cherries were in season she used to pluck the scarlet fruit for His Majesty with her baby fingers all powdered with sugar.

One word from Choiseul was enough to put her out of the question, and he thought to get rid of Madame Du Barry with the same ease. The truth of the matter was that the Duchess de Grammont, who had been Madame de Pompadour's friend, ardently desired to succeed to her position. Although not beautiful she fascinated by her wit and learning, and her salon was the resort of courtiers, philosophers and politicians alike. She was her brother's counsellor and their intimacy had given occasion to much malicious gossip. Of an unfailing courtesy and a sovereign elegance of manner, she held that "morality was only made for the common people."¹

Such were the powerful and unscrupulous adversaries with whom the favourite had to deal. In spite of the love of Louis she might perhaps have been overcome, had not the malcontents rallied round her, and particularly those who were actuated by their personal hatred of Choiseul. To win friends and to obtain the necessary influential connections the Countess gave suppers on the first days after her triumph. But only men responded to her advances. At the first there were present "two Princes of the Blood and three great lords, besides her chief counsellors, the Viscount des Cars and the Count de Bissy."² The women

¹ "There was something attractive and yet despotical in Madame de Grammont's ways; she only allowed one opinion about her; all who loved Monsieur de Choiseul were welcome; the rest did not come to see her." *Memoires du Prince de Talleyrand*, Vol. V., p. 585.

² *Journal inédit du duc de Croy*, published by the Viscount de Grouchy and Paul Cottin, Paris, 1906, Vol. II., p. 366.

continued inflexible, and many affected to be filled with the profoundest contempt. The Duchess de Grammont, the Duchess de Choiseul and the Princess de Beauvau made common cause and left Versailles. During the short sojourn at Marly no ladies were found to join the King at cards. They were slow to pardon the intruder, but several of these disdainful beauties were soon to become Madame Du Barry's intimate friends. The King invited eight of them by special command to the supper which took place on March 25 at Bellevue. Among the guests were also the Prince de Soubise, the Duke de Choiseul, the Duke de Gontaut and the Count de Saint-Florentin, "as if," says a witness, "the King particularly delighted in bringing cat and dog together." The sovereign hoped that such an occasion of intimacy would establish more friendly relations between the minister and the favourite. At supper the latter was seated between His Majesty and the Count de la Marche, who "was well disposed towards that lady," according to the King. The company was very gay; "but the Duke de Choiseul did not exhibit the same serene composure with which he usually bears himself at these entertainments; the Countess displayed that ease of manner which had been hers ever since her presentation; she had charmed as much by her wit as by her ethereal grace." Her beauty was even more striking by artificial light, and the blaze of her diamonds was dazzling. After supper, to which the Viscount Adolphe had also been invited, the King announced the game; he requested "a *vingt-un* for Madame Du Barry, a game of which she is very fond; Madame de Flavacourt exclaimed that she would take part, also Monsieur le Maréchal de Richelieu, who added that he was quite at Madame Du Barry's service." The following morning the King, together with his First Lord-in-Waiting and the Captain of the Guards, was present at her toilette. The hour they spent by her dressing-table was charming, and it was easy to understand Louis XV.'s affection for the pleasure-loving child, so lovely, witty and graceful was she.

Some of the women began to desert Choiseul's party. At

a grand supper to eighteen people which Richelieu gave in honour of his friend, he introduced her to two old ladies of his own time, the Princess de Talmont and the Duchess de Valentinois. The former was somewhat eccentric, but clever, the latter had been indulgent towards all the favourites, and was only too ready to instruct the newcomer in everything pertaining to the Court. But indeed the Countess bore herself with an ease surprising in one to whom so much evil had been ascribed. The verdict of those courtiers who were in a position to compare her with her predecessor, Madame de Pompadour, has thus been summed up by Monsieur de Talleyrand: "Although [Madame de Pompadour] had been brought up and had lived among the financial circles of Paris, which were then quite distinguished, she was not well-mannered, and even Versailles did not cure her vulgarity of language. She differed in all respects from Madame Du Barry, who, though less well educated, had attained a certain purity of language. Madame Du Barry's eyes were not so large, but they were more expressive; her features were well cut, her hair of great beauty; she liked talking and could tell a story pleasantly enough." This latter quality was no doubt a further element in her attraction for the King, who was sensitive to elegance and accuracy of expression, and who, whatever may have been said to the contrary, would never have permitted any deviation from such language in his presence.

Towards the end of May the Court removed to Choisy, and this was the first occasion on which Madame Du Barry accompanied the King in his coach. As if in her honour the performance of plays, suspended since the death of the Dauphin, was resumed. The companies of the Royal theatres, who took it in turns to appear before His Majesty, received their instructions from the First Lord-in-Waiting of the year, but in reality the ordering of the Revels was largely left to the favourite. Naturally, Madame Du Barry has been accused of choosing indecent works to be played before her, but the *Journal des spectacles de la Cour* completely refutes these charges. Besides the tragedies of

Corneille, Racine, Voltaire and Crébillon, and the comedies of Molière, Destouches and Sedaine, the Court witnessed only the most irreproachable plays.

The first performance to be given at Choisy at the command of the Countess was *L'Etourderie*, a comedy in one act by Fagan, as well as a first representation of *Alix et Alexis*, a three-act play interspersed with songs by Ponsinet, the music by Monsieur de La Borde. Of all sentimental dramas this latter is one of the most proper, and is based on a well-known mediæval legend. But ignorant scribblers were all the more inclined to believe it licentious because it had never been acted before, except in the theatre of La Guimard, the *belle damnée*, who with Gardel danced the pas-de-deux in the pastoral scene that evening.

The gay times before the Court went into mourning seemed to have returned; Jeanne's smiles dissipated the melancholy of the King, who surrounded her with tender care, to which she responded with loving caresses. One day "His Majesty accidentally let fall a small case, and Madame Du Barry, dropping on one knee, hastened to pick it up"; he raised her, murmuring gently: "Madame, it is for me to assume such a position, and that for all my life." Her lengthy toilette often delayed the suppers at which she was present, but the vision of her pure beauty, heightened by the charm and fancy of her costume, won the indulgence of all. The King loved to see her in the guise of Flora, and nothing suited the fresh bloom of her youth better than the light silk dress with love-knots of myrtle, the crown of roses on her brow, and the pearls on her delicate arms, in which array the artists so often portrayed her.

In June the Court came to Saint-Hubert, where they intended to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the disc of the sun. Louis XV. was interested in astronomy as in all subjects bearing on the mysterious and infinite. "The King as a lover of all the arts, and one initiated in the most sublime mysteries, observed at Saint-Hubert the transit of Venus before the sun. Madame la Comtesse Du Barry accompanied His Majesty, and the King deigned to

instruct her ladyship in the elements of astronomy that she might be in a position to derive interest from the phenomenon. A courtier wrote the following verses in honour of the occasion :

Que nous diront ce télescope
 Cette Vénus et ce Soleil ?
 Aussi sans ce vain appareil
 Cherchons un plus sûr horoscope :
 En ces délicieux jardins
 Brillent nos astres véritables ;
 C'est dans leurs regards adorables
 Que nous trouverons nos destins ! ”

At about this time the divinity of the hour had in fact the opportunity to influence the fate of a poor girl of twenty years who lived at Liancourt in the French Vexin. She had just given birth to a stillborn child, and as she had not made the declaration of pregnancy required by the law she was accused of infanticide, and condemned to be hanged by decree of the Parliament of Paris. Monsieur de Mandeville, of the black musketeers, was seized with pity on hearing of this affair, and, determined to plead for the unfortunate girl, came to the Court, which was then at Marly. He did not know Madame Du Barry, but he had heard of her goodness of heart and active pity, and to her he turned. Moved by the story he told her, she at once wrote a letter to Monsieur de Maupeou, chancellor of France, which resulted in the reprieve of the condemned girl :

Monsieur le Chancelier,

I understand nothing of your laws ; but they are unjust and barbarous ; they act against all reason, humanity and policy if they sentence to death a poor girl delivered of a stillborn child without having made the necessary declaration. According to the enclosed memorandum, such is the case of the petitioner ; it seems that she was condemned for no more than ignorance of the law, or because she refused to conform to it out of a very natural modesty. I rely on your sense of justice in the consideration of this affair, but the unfortunate girl deserves merciful treatment. I ask of you at least to commute her sentence ; the rest I

leave to the dictates of your heart. I have the honour to be. . . .¹

Madame Du Barry's petition was well received, and "all Paris could not help applauding her beautiful act." Some days later she again deprived the hangman of one of his victims, and on this occasion political interests were involved. The Count de Louësme and his wife, people of good family but deeply in debt, had been served with a warrant for their arrest, and had twice offered violent resistance to the officers attempting to carry it out. They had entrenched themselves in their château of Parc-Vieil on the borders of the Champagne and the Orléanais. There the Countess had stood gun in hand by her husband's side; a bailiff had been killed, and a mounted officer mortally wounded. They had endured a two days' siege before capitulating, and nine prisoners were taken to Montargis.

The case was called before the Parliament of Paris, as it constituted a Crown case, and criminal proceedings were taken. A year later judgment was pronounced condemning Louësme and his wife to be beheaded. The affair created great excitement among the nobility, for since Lally, none of their number had been sentenced to death. The Countess de Moyon, the daughter of the culprits, and their daughter-in-law, Baron de Heldorf's widow, went to beg the King for mercy. Their appeals left him unmoved, but by the help of the Countess de Béarn they obtained access to Madame Du Barry instead, with the result that one day the favourite, supplicating the King on bended knees, "declared that she would never rise until His Majesty had granted her request." Louis' heart was softened, and he dared refuse no longer. "Madame," he replied, "I am enchanted that the first favour you compel me to grant should be an act of humanity."² The letters of reprieve were sent in all haste and were just in time to prevent the

¹ The young girl was named Apolline Grégeois. She was arrested on June 5, and on the 28th the sentence of death was commuted to three years' imprisonment. See Vatel, Vol. I., p. 239.

² *Anecdotes*, p. 114, whose accuracy as to this episode has been verified by Vatel, Vol. I., p. 250.

execution. "This matter," wrote a chronicler, who was little inclined to view the Countess with favour, "does her infinite honour, and has conciliated some of the great families of the kingdom who were concerned."

The Royal mistress showed by these public actions that she intended to make full use of her powers on behalf of the unfortunate. Many turned to her in their distress and were helped, beside the impecunious crowd of poets and literati who sought her protection. The first to think of soliciting her patronage singularly exposed her to attack. In June, 1769, the Chevalier de La Morlière, a bad character and a worse writer, who was a friend of the Roué and the younger Crébillon, thought fit to dedicate a book to this charming representative of the Muses. Incidentally it was by no means one of the impudent productions which had earned him the title of the French Aretino; it contained but a collection of anecdotes arranged "to show the influence of fate on the human heart," and the author called it *Le Fatalisme*. The *Mémoires secrets* announced its publication in words whose spirited satire recall Bachaumont: "Since the elevation of Madame la Comtesse Du Barry at Court brought before the public her beauty, talents and virtues, not one of our writers has as yet burnt incense at the shrine of the new divinity, having perhaps refrained through admiration or respect." Further, "the work though worse than mediocre has been bought up at an astonishing rate, everyone being eager to read the dedication. The general opinion is that the author has obtained tacit permission from the lady in question, and that his example will be followed by other panegyrists more worthy of his heroine."¹

¹ *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des lettres*, Vol. IV., p. 250. (June 11.) On June 26 the same writer says that "the Chevalier de La Morlière, author of the dedication to Madame la Comtesse Du Barry, and whose zeal and homage has been published in several foreign papers, has recently had the honour of being invited to supper with his Minerva." He recognised in the latter a taste for letters and "an intention to protect them. So say they who have had intercourse with this gentle lady, whose natural wit is quite capable of appreciating a purer and more delicate incense." The tone of this extract differs materially from that of the first.

This is the dedication which the favourite had to thank for such ironical compliments :

To Madame la Comtesse Du Barry.

To you, Madame, who are the most charming exception to sad fatalism, I dedicate this work that bears, alas ! but too much witness to the influence of that power. Nature has lavished on you her most precious gifts, the most fortunate destiny appears to rule your career, and to this happy combination you add what is of even greater importance, a gracious and charitable disposition. These estimable qualities, Madame, will inspire your judgment ; you will honour the arts and sciences and all that appears to you worthy of special distinction, and you will thus show a discrimination of real merit that is always independent of circumstances and far superior to the superficialities under which false greatness too often thinks to conceal its pettiness.

I am, Madame, respectfully,

Your most humble and obedient servant,
Chevalier de La Morlière.

But Madame Du Barry was superstitious and only saw a disturbing prophecy in all these praises, for the book bore a motto from one of Seneca's tragedies : " No prayers may prevail against the decrees of Fate."

At the time everything certainly seemed to conspire in her favour. Her position at Court grew daily more secure ; Choiseul even left her in possession for a while, having retired to his estate at Chanteloup after the Bellevue supper. The move was clever and had often been used by Cardinal de Fleury ; it gave Jeanne a respite during which the persecuting epigrams ceased. Everyone submitted to her gentle influence, or perhaps all were at the idol's feet simply because " the wind blew absolutely from that quarter."

The departure of the Court for Compiègne was effected amid much expenditure on equipment. The Countess had at her disposal three coaches-and-six, and her relays at the post-houses were ordered with those of the King. From far and wide people flocked to catch a glimpse of the

favourite, who graciously showed herself at the window, but the cries of admiration which so much beauty and luxury aroused were not unmingled with abuse.

The Sovereign was accompanied by a numerous retinue, of whom many were ladies. When the list of those proposed to form his suite was laid before the King, he had struck off with his own hand the names of the Countess de Brionne, the Countess d'Egmont and the Duchess de Grammont, thus punishing their animosity against his mistress. They revenged themselves for this humiliation by publishing a caricature, *Le Combat des Anagrammes*, of which they themselves formed the subject. "They were supposed to be three Graces . . . appearing to flee in disgust at the sight of a beauty of a different type, whose disorderly appearance and lascivious attitudes were characteristic of an anagram of the word *grace*, a name given only to lost women who have no sense of shame or modesty."¹ The epigram was only circulated privately; it was attributed "particularly to Madame de Grammont . . . who had most reason to bear a grudge against her rival, for the King had once before mortified her more than she could well bear," according to one daring chronicler.²

While on the way to Compiègne the King bestowed on the Countess a striking favour; he presented her with a Crown domain for life. Marie Leczinska herself had coveted the little château of Louveciennes or Luciennes, close to Marly, for its charming situation near Versailles on a hill commanding a fine view of the neighbourhood. It had only one disadvantage, and that was its nearness to the hydraulic engine at Marly, to whose monotonous noise, however, one gradually became accustomed.³ The building was very

¹ *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. IV., p. 266.

² *Anecdotes*, p. 117.

³ Madame Vigée Le Brun, when at Louveciennes, where she was painting the portrait of the favourite, complained of this drawback. "She gave me a room looking out on the engine at Marly, which was then in full activity. This trying noise worried me and disturbed my sleep." But the artist admits that she was sensitive to sounds. Cf. the letter she wrote to a friend, in the *Souvenirs de voyage de la princesse Natalie Kourakine*, Moscow, 1903.

pretty but was small and consequently somewhat inconvenient. It had been the property of Mademoiselle de Clermont, and later of the Countess de Toulouse, His Majesty's aunt and confidant. At her death the reversion of the estate had passed to the Duke de Penthievre, whose young son, the Prince de Lamballe, died there after terrible suffering. The Duke at once relinquished his life interest in a property bearing for him such melancholy associations, and the King made over the estate to his mistress by a warrant of July 24, 1769. Repairs and extensions had to be undertaken before it was fit to receive the Sovereign. As Madame Du Barry henceforth lived at home, her lawyer and not the Treasury defrayed the expenses of the works which were directed by Gabriel.¹ The Royal Architect pushed on the business at the request of the Countess, and building went on during the whole of 1770.²

This was in fact Louis' first gift to the favourite, for as yet she had asked for none. "For fourteen months she received neither pension nor presents from the monarch . . ." wrote a contemporary; "in the midst of the most brilliant Court in the world she lived at her own expense."³ The Roué succeeded later, though with difficulty, in obtaining from the Abbé Terray, minister of finance, a reimbursement of the advances he had made to the Countess for the maintenance of her suite at Versailles. He had not been long in seeing that his hopes would be frustrated by the somewhat contemptuous scrupulousness

¹ This has been brought to light by a letter from Gabriel to Monsieur Le Pot d'Auteuil, of October 28, 1770.

² The extravagant exaggerations of the pamphleteers against Madame Du Barry are exemplified in their allegations as to the expenses incurred by the gift of Louveciennes. The *Anecdotes* speak of the King squandering a million, grave Dalmas makes it six millions and Prudhomme ten, while modern authors have still further increased the sum. Vatel makes known the exact sum from Gabriel's accounts, which were, as usual, excellently kept; it amounted to 138,268 livres, 8 sols, 11 deniers.

³ Sara Goudar, *Remarques sur les Anecdotes*. Later this was changed, and the minister of finance was accused of endorsing Madame Du Barry's drafts on the exchequer as if they were the King's. The charge is not easy to verify.

of his sister-in-law. In vain he tried to convert her to more liberal views ; his imprudent persistence only resulted in the withdrawal of her favour. " All their disputes, which ended finally in complete estrangement, were due to this one cause." ¹

Choiseul, whose position was by no means weakened, though he saw the mistress continually gain in power, returned to the attack at the bidding of his vindictive sister. Madame Du Barry replied to the epigrams that he caused to be circulated by a thousand railleries which delighted His Majesty. But though the minister revived the series of lampoons, he had to restrain their audacity now that the King had definitely named the culprits. He threw the whole burden of the conflict on Madame de Grammont and found excuses for her passion, " which was prompted by the feelings of her heart."

The military fêtes, which took place towards the end of July, were destined to aggravate the discord between the two opposing factions. A pleasure camp had been pitched at Compiègne where the Dauphin and his brothers were to be initiated in the arts of war. Mesdames de France were present, but during these three days the centre of attraction was the fair favourite in her sumptuous attire, who was seen everywhere driving her own phaeton. The young officers were blind to all but her, for one and all had been captivated by her charm. There were forty-two battalions of infantry, a regiment of cavalry and artillery with forty guns under the command of the lieutenant-general, Baron de Wurmser. The troops were posted at Verberie, and marched past, saluting the monarch, who was accompanied by the Princesses and his three grandsons. The Countess was similarly honoured by the Beauce regiment, where her brother-in-law, the Chevalier Du Barry, was a captain under the command

¹ Sara Goudar, writing in 1777, insists with reason that Madame Du Barry had not diminished the public resources by alienation of the Royal funds : " If she had been moved by that passion [avarice] she would own to-day immense estates, whereas she now only enjoys a life interest, that at her death will occasion no loss to the Treasury." (*Remarques*, p. 123.)

of Colonel de La Tour du Pin, who had known the favourite when she lived with the Roué. She invited the officers of this regiment to dinner, and received an invitation in return, to the indignation of the Minister of War, Monsieur de Choiseul.

Madame Denis wrote to Voltaire describing in full this episode, which created such commotion :

I must tell you of the happenings of two days ago, as they will show you very clearly how the land lies. Madame Du Barry has a relative in the regiment of Chevalier de La Tour du Pin, Madame de Saint-Julien's brother. She invited the whole regiment to dinner when in camp at Compiègne. The colonel was very perplexed, and Madame de Saint-Julien went to Monsieur de Choiseul to find out what her brother ought to do. The minister replied angrily : " He may do as he pleases ! " and however much she pressed him he would say no more. The colonel decided to allow his officers to go to Madame Du Barry's dinner, while he himself, his lieutenant-colonel and his major went to dine with Monsieur de Choiseul, having made their excuses to her ladyship. I must explain that when one of these three is not at the head of the regiment it is no longer an official body, but only an assembly of officers in their private capacity. Madame Du Barry pretended not to notice this, and three days later sent word to the regiment that she wished for an invitation to dinner. Madame de Saint-Julien again went to the minister to find out what her brother should do, and as before, he received her with an ill grace, and told her he would have nothing to do with the matter. The regiment decided to invite her to dinner, together with the Marshal de Richelieu, the Count de Maillebois and several others. But Madame de Saint-Julien, who lived with her brother, dared not stay to do the honours of the dinner and left him.

In spite of all these precautions the minister is furious with the Chevalier de La Tour du Pin for having given a dinner in honour of Madame Du Barry. He accused his regiment of slovenliness, although it was one of the finest, and even spoke of it to the King. He says the most unheard-of things ; nevertheless the Chevalier could not be more

graciously treated by the King, and is only waiting for the turn of the wheel. But the most amusing part is that the Duke is furious with Madame de Saint-Julien, who never was at the dinner. Perhaps he is disturbed at the desertion of the Count de Maillebois, who used to be on his side. The latter is an extremely clever and talented man, whom he has always feared, and whom he has kept in the shade by never letting him come near the King.¹

The King, who, according to Madame Denis, "was passionately in love with Madame Du Barry," rejoiced that his favourite should have enjoyed so complete a triumph at these fêtes, but was furious that Choiseul, in his exasperation at her success, had intervened, and he wrote his minister an admonitory letter dealing at length with his rights as master :

I have given you my word to tell you all that I hear about you and that promise I now fulfil. You are said to have reprimanded Wurmser, I do not know why.

You are said to have reprimanded the Chevalier de La Tour du Pin, because Madame Du Barry had dined at the camp, and because the majority of the officers had dined with her on the day of the review.

You have also reprimanded Monsieur Foulon on her account.

You promised me I should hear no more said of you in connection with her.

I speak to you in confidence and as a friend. The public may inveigh bitterly against you ; such is the fate of ministers, especially when they are believed to be opposed to their master's friends ; but nevertheless, the master is well satisfied with their work, and with yours in particular.

Choiseul's dissatisfaction appears to have been partly justified in this case. The anger he showed was largely due to the fears which the success of the Countess inspired, for he felt that behind her his adversaries were intriguing

¹ The brief and trustworthy account given by Madame Denis has been followed in preference to the many other contemporary descriptions of this episode. This was the time at which Madame Denis was attempting to bring about the return of Voltaire to Paris, and she intended to enlist the support of Madame Du Barry.

against him more implacably than ever. He replied to his sovereign's note with submissive humility :

Sire,

I am much moved by the kindness and confidence with which you have distinguished me ; I should be unworthy of it did I not feel it from the bottom of my heart, and respond with the sincerity of the devotion I owe you. . . . I cannot fail to believe, when I see those who surround Madame Du Barry, and whom you, Sire, know at the bottom of your soul as well as I do, that they have especially marked me out as the subject of their malicious fictions, and their desire to inflict injury. . . . Were I not also assured, Sire, of *your goodness of heart and of your discernment concerning the nature of your Court*, I should be horrified at the evil which has been attributed to me, and of which I have been the object. But having confidence in the sentiments which I entertain towards your person, I have despised . . . the slanders, which should, indeed, never be able to affect one *honoured with the confidence of so good a king, and if I may say so, Sire, so honourable a man as Your Majesty*. . . . I have never in my life had high words with Wurmser . . . I have not reprimanded him. . . . I have not reprimanded Monsieur le Chevalier de Tour du Pin. . . . The day when Your Majesty saw the manœuvres of the forty-two battalions, I was told that the Beauce regiment had saluted Madame Du Barry, doing her the same honour as it had done Your Majesty. . . . Next day, when I was watching the manœuvres of this brigade, I told Monsieur de Rochambeau that I had heard the Beauce regiment had saluted other coaches than those of the Royal Family, while His Majesty was still before the line ; that this was not right, and I charged him to warn Monsieur de La Tour du Pin of the unsuitability of saluting when the King was in camp. . . . After the manœuvres I told Monsieur de La Tour du Pin that his regiment was fine and well turned out, but that they did not handle their arms well, nor did they manœuvre with the precise accuracy of the others. . . . As for Foulon, I do not remember ever having reprimanded him ; I despise him because I never thought him honest. . . . I have only once spoken to him of Madame Du Barry, and that was three

weeks ago, on account of a certain Nallet, whom Madame Du Barry had recommended to me. I told Foulon very definitely that I wished to help this man as she desired, and that I should blame him if he did not expedite the matter. . . . If he says that I reprimanded him with regard to Madame Du Barry at any time since I have known him, Monsieur Foulon is an impudent liar. . . . You will be told, Sire, that I have faults; I would willingly correct them, and reproach myself for them as much as ever my enemies could do. . . . *I have but two single aims in life; to serve you well, and to please you.* . . . It is hard to believe, Sire, that you do not know of my wish to please you, *if you will deign to bear in mind that I owe everything to you, that I have been in your service alone and never wish to to be in any other, that in you are united all my sentiments of duty, personal devotion and gratitude, and that I serve you for love and for the most zealous love,* which is worth far more than ambition and talent. . . .¹

Choiseul made it fairly clear to the King whom he considered his enemies. Here he referred to Monsieur de Soubise, and particularly to Monsieur de Richelieu. The hero of Port-Mahon, "the Alcibiades of the age," had been made years younger by the new part he was playing.² He was even now a handsome man and had by no means given up his claims to admiration. Women still appreciated his sparkling wit, the grand manner that came of his ancient lineage, and they looked on him as "an all-embracing genius . . . vivacious and light, an inconstant lover, a tender and faithful friend, zealous in the service of his friends . . . a man of ability and power . . . a

¹ This letter, whose essential passages have been quoted, was published by the Duke de Choiseul in the *Revue de Paris* of 1829, Vol. IV., pp. 50-53. The character of the minister does not appear in a very favourable light when we compare the letter with certain passages in his memoirs, written after his disgrace, and full of outbreaks against a master whom he flattered so long.

² "The Marshal de Richelieu has been made years younger by his present position," wrote the physician Tronchin to his daughter on June 28. "He seems to tread on air, which is indeed his element. He thinks no more of his white hair than if it was as black as ebony. These old courtiers at least move one's pity." Henri Tronchin, p. 335, *Théodore Tronchin*.

steadfast soul, a passionate heart and an absolute genius for winning love." And this portrait, we should remember, was traced by a woman.¹ Richelieu most certainly possessed qualities of real value to the ambitions of his family, but above all he could play the very highest trump—the King's mistress—against his adversaries.

Such was the opinion of the Prince de Condé when he invited His Majesty and the favourite to Chantilly, where the King had only recently been entertained by his magnificent cousin. The Prince displayed great splendour in the *fêtes galantes* he gave, and he did the honours of his estate to Madame Du Barry in every respect. The harmony of the party was complete; the Marquise de l'Hôpital, who came with her lover, Monsieur de Soubise, was eager to join, and only ladies desirous of paying court to the Countess had been included.² The King was solicitous for her wellbeing; she followed the hunt in a coach, "so that no one could complain of being unable to see her; the public was also admitted to the suppers and fêtes, and His Majesty was observed to show ever greater inclination to pay her attentions . . ."³

The return of the Court from Chantilly was the signal for the biennial opening of the Louvre. Two portraits of the favourite were exhibited, which caused such a crush that Horace Walpole complained of not being able to move in the galleries. But when Madame Du Barry went to see the exhibition Monsieur de Saint-Florentin ordered the doors to be closed to the public, and she came accompanied only by the most celebrated artists.

¹ Madame de Monconseil, in the *Portraits et Caractères* of Sénac de Meilhan, p. 51.

² "So far there are only five women willing to see her," wrote Madame Denis on August 10.

³ Cf. this official account with the particulars given in a private correspondence: "Mesdames de Brionne, de Choiseul, de Grammont, de Beauvais, d'Egmont, de Pecquigny and de Ségur, had been struck off the list which the Prince de Condé presented. This event is of importance, for it may be taken as the first stroke of the rod, showing that there is still a rod to strike, which one had doubted. People will certainly take up an altogether different attitude." (Letter by Tronchin.)

F. H. Drouais' two portraits of the favourite were praised to the skies and in turn reviled by his contemporaries. In the first she was represented as the most exquisite of Floras, white and delicate under her roses ; but perhaps it was a little too honeyed, too thin according to the critics of the day. She was given a shallow prettiness by the affected artist, who lavished on his model all the artifices of colouring of his slender brush. The Countess is portrayed in a low-necked, white satin gown, with a string of pearls on the shoulder, and a garland of roses crossing her slight, rounded bosom. Her graciously poised head and heavy ringlets give an ideal impression of youth ; the long, golden curls surround a little face whose mien is at once affected and childlike. Under finely arched and artificially darkened brows her half-closed blue eyes shaded by their long lashes look out on the world with an expression that has been called voluptuous ; yet how caressing, how tenderly malicious it is !¹ Her many charms were enhanced by a wonderful complexion of dazzling purity, for the favourite used little rouge, but she had instead four dark moles that, like tantalising patches, served to set off her lovely colouring. These beauty spots, beloved by Louis XV., are clearly visible in Beauvarlet's engraving of the second portrait, whose original has been lost. Here Madame Du Barry is wearing a riding habit with a man's jacket of grey silk over a half-open waistcoat, showing a fichu of Brussels point. The lines of her rounded bust are but slightly defined under the lace, though the fair lady was proud of her charming person and was not in the habit of concealing her beauty. The critics consequently declared they had been robbed, and Diderot speaks contemptuously of the " thin, spare slenderness " of her figure. But in spite of these adverse views the lovely huntress is not to be denied a very attractive shapeliness of form. These two pictures, the first to perpetuate the beauty of the

¹ Drouais has been criticised for not portraying truthfully the charms of his sitter. " In both cases he gives her a mincing expression, called by young sparks *regard en coulisse*, and never worn by this lady, who is always so straightforward, frank and open. . . . "



MADAME DU BARRY
From a painting by Drouais, 1769



favourite, became the talk of Paris. Engravings were bought all over Europe, and several poets hastened to sing the praises of the new divinity :

SUR LE DOUBLE PORTRAIT DE MADAME DU BARRY.

Quels yeux ! que d'attraits ! qu'elle est belle !
Est-ce une divinité ?

Non, c'est une simple mortelle

Qui le dispute à la beauté.

Entre vous qui décidera,

Beau cavalier, aimable Flore ?

L'Olympe jaloux se taira

Et l'Univers surpris admire et doute encore !

In the eighteenth century women were of small account who could not boast the fellowship of the literary world. Madame Du Barry's long intercourse with men of letters served her in good stead, and we may imagine with what enthusiasm she took up the idea of winning his friendship, who was the undoubted master of them all. Voltaire had for long been away from Paris and was anxious to return. But even to live one winter in the capital he had to obtain the King's consent and win the favour of Choiseul ; and matters were still further complicated by the recent publication of his daring *Histoire des Parlements*, even though he disclaimed its authorship. Madame Denis had in great secrecy spoken to Richelieu of the proposed visit to Paris, and he had promised that the favourite would remove all difficulties to be encountered on the part of the King. " I have prevailed upon a man, who at present prefers to be nameless," she wrote to her uncle, " to persuade Madame Du Barry to speak of you to the King, telling him that she is very desirous of seeing you. It remains to be seen what the King will say. *Monsieur de Choiseul must on no account hear of it.* I shall have an answer in a week at the latest, and if it is favourable I think we need hesitate no longer, for you will then have on the one side this woman's influence over the King and on the other the friendship of the Choiseuls."

The Countess was charmed to do the great man such a service, and suggested his return to the King " as if of her

own accord." He smiled and said, "I shall let you know in ten days what I think of it." Madame Du Barry reported the smile to Richelieu who in turn told Madame Denis, and everyone was full of hope. "Without exactly asking for his recall," Madame Du Barry spoke often of Voltaire to His Majesty and received "gracious and flattering replies." Richelieu, when he left for Fontainebleau, told Madame Denis "to consider the matter settled," and promised to engage the interest of Monsieur de Saint-Florentin. Everything was done with the greatest possible secrecy in order to keep Choiseul in ignorance of the intervention of the Countess. But the days went by and autumn drew to its close; nothing was decided, and the illustrious philosopher began to lose patience. Besides, the idea of the journey attracted him much less than his niece, while the delicate state of his health was a consideration urging him to remain. But from that time on he was full of gratitude to the young favourite who had so eagerly sought to serve him.

Richelieu had been seeking a favourable opportunity to introduce his nephew, the Duke d'Aiguillon, at Court, and at Fontainebleau decided that the right moment had arrived. The death of the Duke de Chaulnes had created a vacancy in the captaincy of the Royal Bodyguards, and Monsieur de Choiseul intended to buy the commission for his relative, the Viscount of the same name. But he was anticipated by the Marshal, who, thanks to the help of the favourite, obtained it for d'Aiguillon. Choiseul was all the more likely to feel the blow, because it gave his adversary the considerable advantage of a supporter who had direct access to the King under whom he would have to work. For the first time he realised that the Countess "was rapidly acquiring sovereign power," and he determined to ask audience of her. But Richelieu had put her on her guard, and strengthened by his counsels she was able to receive her enemy with confidence. The interview lasted three hours, but though much wit and cleverness was shown on both sides, the situation remained unaltered. Madame Du Deffand wrote to Walpole: "'Grandpapa' appears to be

very well satisfied, though not altogether free from anxiety ; her ladyship no longer conceals her hatred of him, and the conversation he had with her when you were here was a mistake on his part, since it resulted in nothing. Every day he suffers some small indignity, such as not being invited to Cabinet suppers ; and from her he gets grimaces when he is her partner at whist, and flouting and shrugging of shoulders, little schoolgirl spitefulnesses that do not fail to lose him the respect of certain foolish people ; but this is of small account."

The Duchess de Grammont had sought in Holland consolation for her disappointments, and must have felt great vexation on hearing of this attempt at reconciliation, which had now become an event of political importance. "The affairs of our all-powerful minister are as easily affected by the smallest trifle as the cheeks of our ladies of fashion by the least change in the weather," wrote Tronchin. "His adversaries are growing in power daily, and although nothing is as yet actually known, the general opinion seems to be that he will not succeed in overcoming them." Of course the minister was vigorously lampooned :

Vive le Roi ! Foin de l'Amour !
Le drôle m'a joué un tour
Qui peut confondre mon audace.
La Du Barry, pour moi de glace,
Va, dit-on, changer mes destins ;
Jadis je dus ma fortune aux ca . . .
Je leur devrai donc ma disgrâce !

Choiseul attempted to put a good face on the matter. He was often away, he visited the cavalry camp at Metz with a Prince of the Blood, the Duke de Chartres, and at Chanteloup he displayed such magnificence that the newsmongers commented on his "forty waiters at table, two companies of players engaged to amuse the guests, and the rest on the same scale."

In the meanwhile the King was hunting at Fontainebleau, and on September 28 he shot two stags in the forest of Sénart. The villagers flocked to gaze at his beautiful mistress, who rode after the hunt in a man's habit. Among the many

ladies who accompanied her were Madame de Mirepoix, the Duchesses de Montmorency and de Valentinois, and the Marquise de l'Hôpital. The brilliant company dined sumptuously at Croix-Fontaine, where the financier Bouret entertained them in his "Pavillon du Roi." Afterwards the gallant farmer-general presented His Majesty with a Venus by Coustou, the head of which had been cleverly altered to reproduce the features of the favourite.

This signal mark of homage gave rise to a most piquant episode. Monsieur de Lauraguais, a friend of the Choiseuls, conceived the idea of producing a young woman at Fontainebleau of great beauty and no character, whom he called the Countess du Tonneau. A caricature was published "representing the favourite in full dress, seated on a barrel." In Madame de Pompadour's time the impudent author of this design would have run the risk of imprisonment in the Bastille, but under the gentle reign of the Countess he was let off with an enforced sojourn in England.

As a rule Madame Du Barry took no notice of the affronts put upon her, but this one was beyond endurance. She showed that it had really touched her to the quick, and appeared no more in public. She was, moreover, worn out by all the Court festivities, and was glad simply to allow herself to be adored by the King in peaceful privacy at Fontainebleau. The Countess occupied the same suite of apartments on the ground floor below those of the King, that had formerly belonged to Madame de Pompadour. Most often she received His Majesty in the great drawing-room looking out on the groves of the Cour de Diane with their melodious fountains.

Louis XV. could no longer boast the exquisite grace of his youth when "he rivalled in beauty the god of Love himself," as Rigaud, Van Loo and Nattier have shown; yet the weary years had not robbed him of his charm. Drouais in 1773 was the last to paint the monarch, and did full justice to his grand manner and to the infinite sadness of his eyes, haunted by mysticism and sensual withal. There had always been a fascination in his countenance, with its

look of royalty, and in his nature, which was in turn so hesitating and so abrupt, so full of contrasts and inconsistencies. He was still "the elusive," "the indefinable," as Madame de Pompadour had dubbed him, as reserved and silent as his ill-regulated childhood had led one to expect ; and pride in his sovereignty had isolated him still more.

His quickness of understanding had only accentuated his indecision of character ; he could never choose, and because of this quality of complete detachment his actions were usually governed by his mistresses, his ministers, or the passing influence of his surroundings. His one vivid desire, that of the senses, could never be slaked ; and to this torture of the flesh was added his deep thirst for celestial things, the thirst of a Christian soul trembling on the verge of eternity. The melancholy with which he spoke of suffering and death was never so great as after a night of self-indulgence.

Always he had kept his troubles to himself, but now with increasing age his spirit failed, and to gentle, compassionate Madame Du Barry he would pour out all his anguish of heart, the cares of his crown, his fear of the morrow at the threats of philosophers and the murmurs of his people. She could console him, and find words to lull his misery ; and succeeded sometimes in restoring him to confidence and serenity.

Her intimate friends came to pay their court to the favourite in her salon at Fontainebleau, and first among them was the Duke d'Aiguillon, who was drawn to her by love as much as by self-interest, for he had fallen a victim to the charms of his patroness. She even induced him to give Adolphe Du Barry a supernumerary cornetcy in his regiment in the place of the Duke de Pecquigny, who had succeeded to his father's title as Duke de Chaulnes. Adolphe was the only one of her connections of whom Madame Du Barry made a protégé. The Roué, for instance, who had dared to beg for the appointment of his friend, Genée de Brocheau, as minister of finance, was advised to travel for

his health and drink the waters, for which in his imprudent ignorance he imagined he had no use.

Next to hunting the theatre was the chief amusement of the autumn season. "The first performance was that of *Méropé* and the *Sauvages*, and was not very entertaining," wrote the Master of the Ceremonies. "The following day *Isabelle et Gertrude* and *Le Déserteur* were acted. The King did not hide that he was extremely bored by the plays, especially on account of their length." But perhaps he missed his favourite who added such lustre to these entertainments. After the insult offered her by Lauraguais, she never appeared except in a private box, and hence His Majesty's display of moodiness.

One day about this time Monsieur d'Aiguillon introduced to the favourite a young officer of his company who desired to address a petition to her. This was Monsieur de Belleval of the light cavalry, and he came to beg for the life of a deserter. The man Carpentier had enlisted and served with zeal in the Provins regiment, but in an attack of homesickness had fled, taking with him his horse and his uniform. He was seized, tried and condemned to death. In his distress he turned to Monsieur de Belleval, who applied to d'Aiguillon. "You cannot obtain what you want through me," said the Duke, "but through Madame Du Barry." The officer was introduced to the favourite and thus relates his introduction :

I had already seen the Countess several times, but only from afar, so that, though I could appreciate the general effect of her celebrated beauty, I could not observe its details. She was carelessly seated, or rather reclining, in a large easy chair, and she wore a white dress with wreaths of roses that I can still see before me. . . . Madame Du Barry was one of the prettiest women at a Court which could boast so many, and certainly the perfection of her loveliness made her the most fascinating. Her hair, which she often wore unpowdered, was of a beautiful golden colour, and she had so much that she scarcely knew what to do with it all ; her wide blue eyes looked with engaging frankness at him to whom she spoke. She had a straight

little nose, and a complexion of dazzling purity. In a word, one was soon under her charm, as happened to me so soon that I wellnigh forgot my petition in the delight of beholding her.

The Duke gallantly drew her attention to the young "red-coat's" flattering agitation, but the latter soon recovered his composure, and urged the confidence placed in her by the whole regiment on behalf of the unfortunate man. "I promise to speak to the King," she replied, "and I hope His Majesty will not deny me this favour. Monsieur le Duc is well aware that his friends are mine, and I am grateful to him for not forgetting it." With a few more gracious words she dismissed them; Monsieur d'Aiguillon kissed her hand, saying: "You grant this to the captain; have you nothing for the company?" She smiled, and held out her pretty hand to Belleval.

On the following day a footman wearing the livery of the Countess brought him the message that he was expected, and at six o'clock he was admitted to the favourite's apartment. There were many people present, among them the King leaning against the fireplace. As soon as she saw the young officer, Madame Du Barry exclaimed: "Sire, here is my 'redcoat' come to thank Your Majesty!" "You must first thank Madame la Comtesse," replied Louis XV., "and tell your protégé that he must blot out the memory of his fault by his zealous attention to duty." The good news was brought to Provins the very same evening, and created much youthful enthusiasm among the officers.

These evidences of popularity caused Choiseul greater anxiety than he cared to show; but he was so clever in hiding his feelings that Madame Du Deffand could write to Walpole when informing him of the appointment of the new minister of finance:

I supped on Tuesday with "grandpapa"; he was, as usual, extremely gay and cheerful; he will be like Charles VII., of whom it was said that "never was kingdom more gaily lost." You know that we have a new Minister of Finance, the Abbé Terray; he is a man of over sixty, who is a King's Councillor, has won a Parliamentary reputation,

and is at the head of Monsieur le Prince de Condé's council. He has an income of fifty million crowns. Do you think he would have accepted the office if he had not felt certain of his power to acquit himself well? He owes his nomination to the chancellor. . . . When Monsieur d'Invault sent in his resignation, the King called a committee at the Chancellor's of the four Secretaries of State, Messieurs de Choiseul and de Praslin, Bertin and Saint-Florentin, so that they might discuss whom to choose. Several people were proposed, among others the Archbishop of Toulouse; every one kept back his opinion so that nothing should prevent him from being the very humble servant of him who was nominated. This committee met on Tuesday the 19th, and on Wednesday morning the Abbé Terray was appointed.

The new minister of finance, being a man of parts, was not slow in showing his devotion to Madame Du Barry. Her position was now secure, and she dealt with Choiseul with ever-growing assurance. On November 16, 1769, she sent him a note, and with playful irony, reminded him of the promise he had made six months ago to her protégé Nallet:

You have been mistaken in your counsellors, Monsieur le Duc, or you would not have written to me six months ago that, since the supplies for the Corsican battalions had best be contracted for, you would, as soon as the Sieur Delisle had arrived, engage the Sieur Nallet, with whose services you were quite satisfied. It seems that the former administrator has other plans in view than yours, since he is so slow to obey your orders. You must feel as I do how little his presence here is required for the carrying out of your wishes. Whether he arrives or not you can thus employ the Sieur Nallet, if you insist in believing him capable of satisfactorily performing his duties; but should you have changed your mind, Monsieur le Duc, do not let us refer to the matter again. I shall be none the less assured of your readiness to do anything that may be agreeable to me.

I have the honour to be with the deepest respect, Monsieur le Duc,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

La Comtesse Du Barry.¹

¹ The *Revue de Paris* for 1829 also published a note from the Countess thanking Monsieur de Choiseul for his kindness in having

This letter with its restrained irony and light touch of impertinence must have given Monsieur de Choiseul food for reflection.

The writer who has most generously supplied the biographies of Madame Du Barry with anecdotes, invented a very amusing inaugural scene for the year 1770. "On the first day of January, Madame Du Barry entered the King's apartment with great liveliness of manner, and said she had come to ask for her New Year's gift, namely the '*loges de Nantes*' . . .¹ She added that it was for her dear friend, Madame de Mirepoix. The King smiled, and replied: 'Madame, I grieve to say that I cannot grant you this favour, as I have already disposed of the *loges*.' Pouts from the fair Countess, and the reply: 'Very well, this is the fourth time you have refused me a favour; deuce take me, if I ever trouble you again.' 'You are quick to pout,' answered His Majesty, 'I can do no more, for the gift is already promised, and to whom do you think, Madame? To you.'"

Pidansat de Mayrobert, the chronicler of this event, was evidently little acquainted with Court etiquette; custom did not permit one to rush in to the King like that, especially on January 1. Besides, the favourite knew Louis XV. too well to dare to make such a demand so directly and in such a manner. Yet it was a fact that she had written some time previously to the sovereign, requesting the concession of the '*loges de Nantes*' to Madame de Mirepoix, and that on December 23, His Majesty signed the letters patent granting the income derived from these shops to Madame Du Barry herself.

Madame de Mirepoix lost nothing by this decision. The King was grateful to her for having been willing to protect allowed "her brother" to keep his company of dragoons. The Goncourts were deceived by the facsimiles submitted to the *Revue* by Choiseul, and were surprised to see "the unformed letters of a child, who had just begun to write." But the notes were dictated to Chon, and only the signature was written by Madame Du Barry herself.

¹ The revenue derived from certain shops.

the favourite from the first. She had similarly been intimate with Madame de Pompadour, but then she was on the side of her friends, the Choiseuls, and of her brother, the Prince de Beauvau. Her kindness to Madame Du Barry may be traced to the influence of her enormous debts, which only Louis XV. could reduce. Besides gambling, this great lady, whose beauty was still so youthful, who was always "so gentle and obliging," had one other passion, a sincere love for her husband. Such a state of affairs was rare and even a little ridiculous in the eighteenth century, but the delightful woman had a gifted personality and could save the situation. She seldom left Versailles, and was counted among the favourite's faithful *soupeuses*.

After the *débotté* the company usually repaired to the King's apartment on the first floor for supper and for cards. These rooms had formerly belonged to Madame Adelaide, but she now occupied Madame de Pompadour's last quarters on the ground floor, an arrangement which left free the whole floor of the "Petits Cabinets" for the mistress, as His Majesty had desired. The "Petits Cabinets," where Louis XV. and his guests used formerly to spend the evening, were at the top of the building above the Royal bedchamber and its adjoining rooms, and formed part of the King's suite of apartments.¹ In this silent quarter of Versailles the Sovereign could withdraw from the world of politics and parade, and here he lodged Marie-Josèphe de Saxe during her widowhood. Here, too, she died of grief on March 13, 1767, and three years later the rooms were assigned to Madame Du Barry.

Successive occupants have made of the place a delightful dwelling. The narrow, low-ceiled rooms have even now an intimate charm, and the effect of the plain white-and-gold of the decoration is most happy. But they are full of sad memories, fading indeed with the years, though the gold of the mirrors and panels still shines bright. We should have

¹ P. de Nolhac, *Le Château de Versailles sous Louis XV.*, whose thorough researches have corrected the many inaccuracies of the historians on this point.

seen them when the beautiful mistress was at the height of her glory, when courtiers came to pay her devoted homage, especially when in the evening the lights brought out the rarity of the furniture, the incomparable beauty of the inlaid work, of chased bronzes and of painted porcelain, of the heavy carpets on which trailed the long panier-dresses of the great ladies who formed the court of the favourite, the Duchess de Valentinois, Madame de l'Hôpital, the Princess de Talmont, Mesdames de Montmorency and d'Aiguillon, and many others.

Mademoiselle Chon Du Barry's apartments adjoined those of her sister-in-law. In the numerous cabinets on the same floor and above it Louis XV. kept his aviary, his store of sweetmeats, his library, which contained numerous geographical charts, and bracketed to a narrow window was his telescope, with which he studied the stars, and with which he could descry from afar the equipages of his courtiers in the Avenue de Paris.

The Duke de Croy has described in his journal the general feeling at Versailles at this time: "I observed that by degrees people went more and more to see the Countess. She had been given the 'Cabinets' rooms, which formerly belonged to Madame the late Dauphine. All this gave her the advantage of being treated openly as a lady of the Court; she was, with everyone else, present at all the entertainments, and one became accustomed to it. Thus she gained much, but she appeared to have no aptitude for intrigue; she loved dress, and to be seen everywhere without showing any desire to intervene in State affairs. . . . Her manner to the other ladies seemed respectful, and she never ventured too far. Altogether, I was inclined to believe that people would become accustomed to her, and that perhaps she had no ambition to become other than she was."

But the Countess was more powerful than the old courtier realised. At that time Choiseul himself would have yielded, and wished for a reconciliation with the mistress, but the latter was no longer prepared to "meet him half way."

He confided the anxiety this caused him to the Marquise Du Deffand, and one of her friends composed the following lines, whose vivacity masks their serious intent :

A Madame la Comtesse Du Barry, à l'occasion de sa division avec
Monsieur de Choiseul.

Déesse des plaisirs, tendre mère des Graces,
Pourquoi veux-tu mêler aux fêtes de Paphos
Les noirs soupçons, les honteuses disgrâces ?
Ah ! pourquoi méditer la perte d'un Héros ? . . .
Soumets les dieux à ton empire ;
Vénus sur tous les cœurs règne par sa beauté ;
Cueilles dans un riant délire
Les roses de la volupté ;
Et rends le calme à Neptune agité !
Ulysse, ce mortel aux Troyens formidable
Que tu poursuis dans ton courroux,
Pour la beauté n'est redoutable
Qu'en soupirant à ses genoux.

The authority of the Abbé Terray, who was himself so unsparingly lampooned, was increasing ; Monsieur d'Aiguillon was on the best of terms with the mistress ; on all sides unfavourable signs were accumulating against Monsieur de Choiseul, and Madame Du Deffand, who had for so long trusted in " Grandpapa's " star, wrote to Walpole :

Until now our friend has kept a good face on the matter, but I doubt whether we shall reach the end of the year without some great change in the state of affairs. . . . La Du Barry by herself is of no consequence, she is a stick for the support of others. . . . It was " Grandpapa's " fault that he did not do as he liked with her ; I cannot believe that his conduct has been right, or that his pride has been well-judged. In my opinion Mesdames de Beauvau and de Grammont have proved unwise counsellors. At present he has another friend who does not agree with these ladies, but who cannot diminish their ascendancy over him ; this lady is Madame De Brionne. . . . I think she will cost him a great deal of money.

With the arrival of the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, the minister's prestige rose again, at least temporarily. The contemplated union between Maria Theresa's daughter and the heir to the throne of France had been the work of

Choiseul, and the young Dauphine would no doubt prove grateful to him. Madame Du Barry had been inspired with such diffidence by her enemies that she hesitated to appear at the approaching entertainments. "There was much discussion," wrote the Duke de Croy, "whether the favourite was going to the wedding or not. She had ordered several charming costumes, for she loved dress and would have been inconsolable at not being allowed to come." Nevertheless, she made all arrangements for leaving the Court until after the marriage celebration, but Richelieu, who was prudent and knew his sovereign, saved her from committing such an irretrievable indiscretion.

The fair Archduchess came, travelling by short stages, amid the acclamations of the crowds lining the route, who hailed her as a pledge of peace. On the eve of May 14 Louis XV. and the Dauphin, together with the Royal Family, arrived at Compiègne, where they intended to receive her. The following day a brilliant cortège was formed which went to meet her in the forest. Mesdames de France and all the ladies were in full dress, the King and the Princes were wearing the decoration of the Holy Ghost. The coaches advanced slowly to the sound of drum and clarion as far as the border of the wood, where Louis descended, for there before them came the graceful young bride of fifteen. She was neither tall nor beautiful, but her figure was lithe and slender, and she had laughing eyes and a dazzling complexion. She jumped from her carriage, and in an instant was at the feet of the King; he raised her, clasping her in his arms, and then presented her to the Dauphin and Mesdames, who embraced her in turn. The next day Marie Antoinette was taken to the château of La Muette, where she was received by her young brothers-in-law, the Count de Provence and the Count d'Artois. In the evening the King supped there "with Monsieur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, the Royal Family, some Princes and Princesses of the Blood, the ladies-in-waiting and several other members of the high nobility. The Countess Du Barry was also present." She was indeed the most

beautiful of the forty great ladies there. "Her presence at this banquet," said Croy, "led one to believe that she would succeed in crushing the party opposing her." Her name appeared on the list of guests between those of the Duchess de Chevreuse and the Duchess de Mirepoix, a fairly high place. With the other ladies invited she had received the following note from the First Lord-in-Waiting :

Madame,

I have the honour to inform you that the King has included you in the list of ladies who may come to La Muette the 15th of this month, on the occasion of the arrival of Madame la Dauphine. If for any reason you are unable to be present, I beg you to inform me of it.

I am with respect, Madame, your most humble and obedient servant,

Le Duc d'Aumont.

On the following day the marriage service was held in the chapel of Versailles. The gorgeousness displayed on all hands was unprecedented, but the Countess exceeded everyone in the splendour of her attire. The scene was one of marvellous pageantry and surpassed in magnificence the recent weddings of the Princess de Lamballe and the Duchess de Chartres. The spring sun shone ; the sound of the organ mingled harmoniously with the voice of the Archbishop of Rheims ; the King's eyes wandered from the Dauphine, all in white brocade, to his wonderful mistress and her brave show of jewels.

There followed nine days of festivities, in which Madame Du Barry always took part. The day after the ceremony witnessed the inaugural representation at the Château's new Opera-house. The favourite, who was very much in evidence in her box, received nearly all the honours, a circumstance which "Madame la Dauphine did not appear to appreciate," as Papillon de la Ferté wrote in his diary. Unfortunately, Quinault and Lulli's wearisome *Persée* had been selected for this first performance, but the entertainments were often varied, and one evening after the ball the Court went out into the gardens and mixed with the crowd.

The whole park was illuminated ; at the end of a long vista the temple of the Sun was discernible ; shining gondolas glided by on the shimmering Grand Canal, making the smooth surface sparkle with the reflections of the stars. Along the " Tapis Vert " pale statues gleamed in the darkness, and the limpid waters of the " Parterre d'Eau " reflected in fantastic lines the image of the Château's immense façade and its blazing lights. Neither the King nor the Dauphine had ventured out for fear of the fresh night air. But from the balcony of the " Galerie des Glaces " they could enjoy the witchery of the scene with its twelve flaming groves ; and among the crowd they could distinguish the favourite on the arm of gallant d'Aiguillon, Madame de Brionne with the Duke de Choiseul, the youthful Countess de Polignac, the Princess de Lamballe, the Duchesses de Grammont, de Boufflers, de Fitz-James, the Countesses de Broglie, de Chabrilan, d'Egmont, and many others, the pride and ornament of Versailles.

In the whirl of festivities all bitterness of heart was forgotten, but the feud between Madame Du Barry and the minister soon blazed up anew on the subject of two actresses. The Dauphin was an admirer of Racine's tragedies, and especially of *Athalie*, which he knew by heart, and he wished this masterpiece to be performed. The play was to be produced with great splendour, and was expected to be the most beautiful performance of its kind ever seen. Mademoiselle Clairon, who had left the stage three years before, offered to take the leading part, and was supported by the Duke d'Aumont's daughter, the Duchess de Villeroy, and by Monsieur de Choiseul. The favourite, on the other hand, upheld the claims of Mademoiselle Du Mesnil, whose impassioned acting appealed to the taste of the age. La Clairon was triumphant, but not without exciting much opposition. " It was a crying shame," wrote Monsieur de Croy, " to deprive Mademoiselle Du Mesnil of a part which she played with such distinction." La Clairon's " simple, rational " rendering was not received by the dissatisfied public with the acclamation of her former successes.

The blow was great, and in spite of all that had passed, Madame Du Barry "pitied the ancient Melpomene for her humiliation," and presented her with a magnificent costume.

On the evening of May 30 the King and the favourite went to Bellevue. From the terrace they watched the display of fireworks given, according to ancient custom, by the town of Paris, in honour of the young bridal pair. It was to be in the place Louis XV. and Marie Antoinette and Mesdames were driving to the capital in order to be present. They had reached the Cours-la-Reine, where they obtained a full view of the beautiful, illuminated city, when cries of terror were heard, causing them great agitation. An enormous crowd was being crushed and stifled in the rue Royale; the badly-filled ditches had given way with fatal consequences; people were trodden under foot and the terrible piles of corpses grew. The Royal carriages returned with the brokenhearted little Dauphine. "Three hundred lives are said to have been lost" wrote Monsieur de Croy. "This tragic festival caused the greatest consternation among the people, an unfavourable omen as regards the purpose of that memorable marriage."¹

¹ The official figure was 132.

CHAPTER III

THE FAVOURITE AND THE MINISTERS

The Breton Parliament—Madame Du Barry and the Duke d'Aiguillon—The Chancellor Maupeou and the Parliaments—Disgrace of the Duke de Choiseul—Gustavus III.—The Dauphine and the Favourite—Marriage of the Count de Provence—The Duke d'Aiguillon appointed to the Ministry—The Salon of 1771—Choiseul made to resign his position as Colonel of the Swiss Regiment—Generous Intervention of Madame Du Barry.

THE arrival of a Dauphine at Court materially altered the relative positions of the two opposing parties. Here was a new power to be taken into account and Mesdames immediately set themselves to prevail on the young Princess to exert her influence against that of the favourite. Thus Marie Antoinette and Madame Du Barry were to be at variance from the first. The Dauphine despised the woman who was only there "to amuse the master" and she suffered in her pride at seeing another occupy the position that was rightfully hers. On the other hand the Countess feared the charm of the young bride whose ingenuous grace had captivated the King; she might become a formidable instrument in the hands of the Barriens' opponents, and the mistress consequently resolved to take a more decided interest in politics.

Naturally she was on the side of Choiseul's enemy, Richelieu, and supported the interests of the Duke d'Aiguillon, his nephew. This was not surprising, for the policy they upheld, that of complete resistance to the demands of the Parliaments, was in accordance with the spirit of Louis' own government. Thus Madame Du Barry espoused the cause of d'Aiguillon in the matter of the Breton Parliament, an affair which also involved the honour of the King.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon, "the dark, sombre courtier," was

undoubtedly in love, at least for the time, with the woman who worked so devotedly for his advancement. Of course, the Duke and her ladyship were said to be on the most intimate terms, just as had formerly been said of Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour. The Duke de Choiseul, whose accusations against his rival can scarcely be allowed great value, wrote later in his memoirs : " He had persuaded the King that he was a martyr to his power and to his devotion to His Majesty's person, nor did he meet with much difficulty in winning and *sharing with the King* the good graces of Madame Du Barry." But more impartial witnesses gave a different explanation of Monsieur d'Aiguillon's influence over the favourite. " The control he exercises is due rather to his deference and his attentions than to any decided ascendancy he may have over her," wrote the Austrian Ambassador to Kaunitz. That for the somewhat faded attractions of this man the Countess should have risked honours, fortune and the affection of a jealous and suspicious sovereign alike, is unthinkable. According to Mercy, " Monsieur d'Aiguillon's very clever and devoted friend " was not the young favourite, but rather Mademoiselle Chon Du Barry. The latter had at once realised the value of the support of the able and determined nobleman who had formerly been Chief Commandant of the province of Brittany, and was experienced in the management of men.

Richelieu's nephew has suffered much detraction, but he possessed nevertheless qualities of intelligence, suppleness and perseverance, and his official position bore sufficient witness to his bravery. He won all his promotions on the field of battle, for he had campaigned in Italy while still Count d'Agénois. Needless to say, he fought there in desperation, for love of the fair La Tournelle, Duchess de Châteauroux, whom the King had just carried off from him. At the attack of the Château-Dauphin in Piedmont, he was dangerously wounded ; " the same blow seemed to strike Madame de La Tournelle," wrote Maurepas, " which rather grieved the King."¹ As Duke d'Aiguillon and Com-

¹ *Mémoires du comte de Maurepas*, Vol. IV., p. 114.

mandant of Brittany, he repulsed the English during the Seven Years' War, and in September, 1758, won over them the celebrated victory of Saint-Cast. His popularity was then at its height, but it was not to last for long.

In 1764 the province rose against its governor on account of the imposition of certain taxes which had been rejected by the Parliament of Rennes. The King had reversed their decree, to which the Parliament replied by dissolving, and the magistrates, followed by the armed forces of the whole country, commenced a relentless attack on the Duke d'Aiguillon. The Attorney-General, Monsieur de la Chalotais, and his son, who led the revolt, accused the governor of despotism, assailed him with bitter taunts, and even denied him the honour of having won Saint-Cast, saying that at the mill commanding the field "the Breton troops had been covered with glory, and their general with flour." According to Choiseul this epigram cost the two magistrates an imprisonment, and with them four other members of the Breton Parliament were arrested.

In the lawsuit of 1770 against d'Aiguillon he was accused of every conceivable crime, the allegations as often as not being unsupported by evidence. He was re-appointed Commandant by the Duke de Duras, and brought forward in his defence documents which were burnt in public by the hangman at Rennes. But Richelieu contrived interviews for him with the favourite, and thus gave him the opportunity of interesting her in the smallest details of his case. He spoke of the inflammable, independent Bretons, and the difficulties in the way of him who would govern them, many having failed who attempted the task; he told her of his troubles, of the life darkened by calumny that he was destined to lead did she not come to his help; and with gentle persuasion he gradually won her over. His mother also pleaded his cause with an impassioned eloquence that succeeded in convincing the Countess.

Thus for the first time the favourite exercised her influence over the sovereign in a matter of grave political importance. She had first to foil the craftiness of the Chancellor Maupeou,

who was the real instigator of the Brittany affair, and controlled it, usually to his own advantage. In the Ministry he appeared to have deserted Choiseul and taken d'Aiguillon's part ; but, as the result of the judicial debate showed, he served him to such ill purpose that Monsieur Linguet, the Duke's chief advocate, wrote : " What cruel friends you have there, monsieur le duc."

The King ratified the judgment of the Court of Peers, and all kinds of difficulties were brought up hindering the progress of the trial. The demands of the Parliaments knew no bounds, public opinion was hostile to the accused and to the government, and " the most convincing arguments could scarcely have overcome all the prejudice, partiality and intrigue."¹ The Chancellor turned to the ready tact of the Minister of Finance for advice, and was told : " We must extricate ourselves from this affair in the way least compromising to authority." Louis XV. ordered the whole procedure to be annulled, and Maupeou made the following energetic speech before the combined chambers :

" The King has been surprised that some of the witnesses have deposed to facts alien to the trial, and that they have backed their depositions by council decrees and orders emanating from his supreme authority. Those who are charged with the execution of these orders are responsible to the King alone, and his Majesty would be lacking in due dignity were he to submit the details of the government of his kingdom to a discussion by a merely judicial assembly. He has observed in Monsieur le duc d'Aiguillon nothing but the greatest zeal, and is satisfied that he has in no way abused the power confided to him. But if his Majesty considers it his duty to justify the Duke publicly and deny all that may have offended his honour, he also owes it to his own prestige not to allow others to penetrate into the sanctuary of his administration. . . ."

Indignation was widespread, and in the popular ferment might be read a warning that henceforth absolute monarchy was only to be maintained by *coups d'état*. The anger

¹ A private letter of Monsieur d'Aiguillon, of May 4, 1770, quoted by Flammermont in *Le chevalier Maupeou et les Parlements*, p. 83.

of the public, as usual, found expression in ballads, and Madame Du Barry's protégé was lampooned as follows :

Oublions jusqu'à la trace
De mon procès suspendu ;
Avec des lettres de grâce,
On ne peut être pendu.
Je triomphe de l'envie,
Je jouis de la faveur ;
Si j'avais perdu la vie,
Je n'aurais pas ce bonheur ;
Mais, grâce aux soins de ma mie,
Je n'ai perdu que l'honneur !

While Messieurs de la Chalotais languished in prison, the Duke d'Aiguillon was fêted at Louveciennes, and invited to a dinner over which his Majesty presided. The candles in the golden chandeliers of the Countess' drawing-room shed their soft light on a brilliant company. She herself was pale under her rouge, for she was exhausted by the agitations of the campaign she had conducted on behalf of her protégé. Louis could not withdraw his gaze from his mistress, and yet he was still thinking of Elizabeth of Austria, the Archduchess who had sworn she would marry no one else. In his secret correspondence we read how he gave instructions that an agent leaving for Vienna should be careful to examine the Princess "from top to toe, not excepting any part of her that he could possibly see."¹ At that time, too, he sent a diplomatic reply to a letter that Choiseul had written in his anxiety at the support given to the Duke d'Aiguillon :

You will find a letter in this packet, again from Monsieur de Fuentès [the Spanish Ambassador]. His praise of you is very well-judged.

First about Monsieur d'Aiguillon. How can you imagine that he will take your place ? I like him well enough certainly, since the trick I played on him a long time ago ; but what good could he do seeing that he is so hated ?

You manage my affairs well, and I am satisfied with you ; but have a care of those in whom you confide and of gratuitous advice ; I have always hated it, and detest it now more

¹ June 6, 1770. Boutarie, *Corr. Secrète de Louis XV.*

than ever before. You know Madame Du Barry ; most certainly I did not become acquainted with her through Monsieur de Richelieu although he knew her, and he dare not see her ; the only time that he has seen her was at my express command, and that was only for a moment. I had thought of making her acquaintance before she married. She is pretty, I am pleased with her, and her, too, I am always advising to have a care of those in whom she confides and of her advisers ; you may be sure she has several. She has no feeling of hatred for you ; she recognises your talent and bears you no grudge. The denunciations of her have been frightful, and for the most part unfounded. They would all be at her feet if . . . Such is the world.

She is very pretty ; she pleases me, and that should be enough. Do they want me to take a girl of quality ? If the Archduchess were agreeable to me I should marry her with pleasure. But I should prefer to see her and know her first. Her brother has been looking for a wife, and has not succeeded. I think I should be able to judge better than he, for this matter must really be brought to an end ; otherwise the fair sex is sure to continue disturbing me, as you may rest assured I do not intend to give you a Dame de Maintenon. And that, I think, is sufficient for the present. . . .

These opinions notwithstanding, his Majesty graciously permitted the Duke d'Aiguillon to join the Court at Marly. The sojourn in that little château was expected to establish closer relations between the members of the Royal Family, and Louis XV. felt some anxiety as to how the favourite would be received by the Dauphine and the Princesses. The latter were now elderly women, whose solid maturity bore but little resemblance to the gracefulness of their youth as portrayed by Nattier. When Madame Sophie was at the convent of Fontevault she had been a fair, shy girl with the delicate charm of youth ; but the years had extinguished her powers of will, of thought, and of passion, and left her an insipid, colourless woman. Madame Victoire, the lovely brunette of the picture, with the long, disturbing eyes, still boasted the imposing presence of the Bourbons, but her attractions had vanished, and only goodness of



MADAME DU BARRY
Bust in biscuit de Sèvres by J. B. Lemoyne

heart remained. Both were dominated by their haughty sister, Madame Adelaide, whom in her youth the painter drew in the likeness of a fair Diana resting beside a fountain. Since the death of the Infanta and of Madame Henriette, she had been the King's favourite daughter, but even then how little they had in common! She was always unoccupied, and spent her life in petty machinations, guided in everything by her Mistress of the Robes, the intriguing Madame de Narbonne.

In the salon on the ground floor of Versailles, with its outlook both on the Parterre d'Eau and the Parterre du Nord, Mesdames de France received their little circle of supporters. The Duke de Choiseul was now among those who came most eagerly to pay their court to the Princesses, although they had formerly always declined to see him, particularly since he drove out the Jesuits. But they had been drawn together by their common animosity against the favourite.

Madame la Dauphine was thus to live in an atmosphere of violent hostility to the Countess, and the latter, with a presentiment of the antipathy with which she would be regarded by her, prepared to strengthen her hold over the Sovereign. But for the moment she thought only of resting. During the short stay at Marly she might be seen walking in the great park, where the water of the wonderful fountains tinkled melodiously on their marble basins; and she used to meet the King in "the groves of Luciennes" or on the terraces of the summer-house. She wore full-dress only in the evenings, when she joined the Dauphine at cards. The latter was annoyed at the attentions his Majesty paid to his beautiful mistress, and wrote to her august mother describing the chilly atmosphere of these evening receptions: "Madame, my dearest mother, the King shows me every kindness, and I love him tenderly; but his weakness for Madame Du Barry is pitiful, for she is the stupidest and most impertinent creature you could imagine. She played cards with us every evening at Marly; twice she sat beside me, but she never spoke to me, and I made no attempt to

enter into conversation with her ; though when necessary I have spoken to her."

At Choisy the number of people in attendance was larger, and the King gave orders for performances at the little theatre of the château. One evening Madame Du Barry, Madame de Mirepoix and the Duchess de Valentinois found that their seats in the front row had been taken. The Countess de Grammont, a lady of the bedchamber to the Dauphine, and a sister-in-law of the Duchess Béatrix, on this occasion let fall certain biting expressions aimed at the favourite, and was in consequence punished by being sent into exile. "Her banishment created a tremendous sensation," for she was on the best of terms with the Choiseul family. It showed that her ladyship was becoming a power to be reckoned with, and the young Princess, who saw how a blow had been aimed at one of her own household through that power, could not forgive her.¹

From Choisy the Court removed to Compiègne, where the days were chiefly spent in hunting. The Countess rode after the hunt wearing the masculine garb of grey silk and lace that she so much affected. But at cards, at suppers and banquets she had an opportunity of displaying the wonderful creations whose good taste and elegance led the fashion at Court. In spite of her fatigue she was still the fairest woman there, and d'Aiguillon was an expert at telling her so in those long interviews, whose wearisome discussion of business he wisely tempered with his gallantry. His affair was by no means over ; the Parliament persisted in their denunciations, wished to continue his trial, and tried to deprive him of his title as a peer of France, saying that he had forfeited it.²

The favourite exerted herself to allay the storms of passion which were roused in the King by his feeling of uneasiness at the "republican multitude," whose ideas seemed likely to checkmate his royal authority. Gently,

¹ P. de Nolhac, *Marie-Antoinette dauphine*, p. 147.

² On July 2, the Parliament issued a decree excluding d'Aiguillon from the peerage, but Maupeou had it cancelled.

tenderly the Countess strove to reassure the monarch, laughing at the pretensions of the "bigwigs" and their supporters among the Princes of the Blood, and making excuses for the people who had been deceived as to the intentions of their sovereign. The people held no political opinions, and the only reforms for which they clamoured were such as would relieve their poverty. They were convinced that the magistrates were fighting their cause against the demands of despotism, and placed all their trust in them; they hated Maupeou, Madame Du Barry, and the whole of that party, and all their sympathies were with Choiseul, who supported the Parliaments.

While at Compiègne a violent dispute between Richelieu and the minister arose, and in the face of the whole Court the Marshal accused the Duchess de Grammont of travelling in the South of France for the purpose of inciting the Provence and Languedoc Parliaments to rebellion. "I told H.R.H. that it looked extremely like a stratagem of the Duke de Choiseul," wrote Mercy to Maria Theresa; "The Dauphine seemed to disagree with me, though she did not tell me her reasons for believing the contrary; she added simply that she would let me know them later when she could speak to me at greater leisure." After this episode Louis XV. began to doubt the fidelity of his minister, for his confidence in him was shaken. He was observed to avoid conversation with him, and perhaps he was already thinking of the *lettre-de-cachet* which was destined to send him into exile.

On leaving Compiègne the King, the Dauphine, Mesdames and the favourite broke their journey at Chantilly, where Condé gave them a magnificent reception. But here Louis XV. was seen to give all his attention to Marie Antoinette, while the Prince devoted himself to the Countess, who could judge at its true value the disinterestedness of his assiduous homage.

On August 31, the Court returned to Versailles, and great preparations were begun for the move to Fontainebleau. Dressmakers and silk and lace merchants came and went

in the apartments of the Countess, who yet found time to listen to d'Aiguillon, receive Maupeou, and speak of serious matters to the King. The interminable Brittany affair continued to threaten the peace of the kingdom, not to speak of that of the sovereign. "Agitation is widespread," wrote Madame Du Deffand; "the Parliaments all stand by each other. . . . We are smothered in petitions, addresses, proclamations, decrees, letters-patent, etc., etc. . . ." Maupeou persuaded Louis XV. to hold another *lit de justice*, whereby to confiscate all the documents connected with the trial, and to forbid the Parliament any further attacks on d'Aiguillon. The King gave his Council no warning of his intention until half-past ten o'clock of the evening before the ceremony. Choiseul, who was going to hunt the next day at La Ferté-Vidame with the banker Laborde, thought he might make his excuses, and the King readily granted him leave with a gracious smile that gave no hint of his secret.

The third day of September proved a surprise to many people. Madame Du Deffand described to Walpole her agitation on hearing the cannon announcing his Majesty's arrival in Paris :

This morning at ten o'clock I heard to my great astonishment the firing of cannon ; I said to myself, "The King has been at Versailles since Friday, when he returned from Chantilly ; can Madame la Dauphine be coming to Notre-Dame?" I rang for my servants and was told that the "Place Louis XV. was full of musketeers, the King having just come to the Parliament." Promptly I imagined that all was lost, that at least some of the Parliament would be put to the sword, that perhaps . . . in short, I was all in a whirl. Where should I send? To Madame de Mirepoix, with whom, by the way, I am on the best of terms? My servants went ; she was not awake. I sent to all my acquaintances in the neighbourhood, ending up with the fat Duchess [d'Aiguillon], but all were astonished and knew nothing. I was on the point of getting up, I ordered my carriage, intending to go to Madame de Beauvau, and perhaps immediately after to Gennevilliers [to Madame de

Choiseul]. . . . I hope you will be satisfied when you hear that the whole turmoil was for Monsieur d'Aiguillon. The King has reprimanded the Parliament, has confiscated the minutes, the copies and all the documents of the case, has forbidden any further mention of the affair, and has enforced this prohibition by the most severe threats should it be disobeyed. . . .

Monsieur d'Aiguillon seemed to have won the day ; the story goes that he gave the favourite a superb vis-à-vis as a token of his gratitude. According to the libellers this masterpiece was further said to have cost 52,000 livres, a sum sufficient " to support a whole province for several months " ; and the usual verses followed these hungry reflections :

Pourquoi ce brillant vis-à-vis ?
Est-ce le char d'une déesse,
Ou de quelque jeune princesse ?
S'écriait un badaud surpris.
Non (de la foule curieuse
Lui répond un caustique), non,
C'est le char de la blanchisseuse
De cet infâme d'Aiguillon.

Thus did the mob sum up its judgment of the Brittany affair, and nothing could henceforth shake its opinion. The suspension of the trial proved that the Duke was guilty, and the King had been induced to pardon d'Aiguillon by Madame Du Barry and her partisans.¹

At Fontainebleau the favourite occupied the same rooms as before, while Madame la Dauphine was given the apartments of the late Queen. All the entertainments seemed as much in honour of the mistress as ever, and were often inspired by her. In the world of pleasure she was soon without a rival, and her good taste, her tact and her familiarity with literature eminently fitted her for the task of

¹ Vatel, who had carefully studied the *Mémoire pour le duc d'Aiguillon* by the famous lawyer Maître Linguet, agrees with the latter as to the Duke's innocence. Monsieur Cruppi, writing from an unbiassed standpoint, says that " never have criminal proceedings been based on vaguer presumptions and more untrustworthy accounts. The incredible levity of the Parliaments in criminal matters was displayed here as in the case of La Barre."

choosing the plays to be performed. Together with the First Lord-in-Waiting for the year, the Duke d'Aumont, and his sister, the Duchess de Villeroy, the Countess arranged the repertory of the plays to be acted before the Court.

"The opening performance on Saturday the 13th (October) at the theatre of Fontainebleau," wrote Papillon de la Ferté in his diary, "was that of *Arlequin et Scapin rivaux* and *La Bûcheron*, followed by a ballet, altogether too long." Two days after that the *Trois Cousines*, appropriately followed by the *Ecole des Maris*, was acted. Somewhat later "two comic operas, the only ones the King liked," were played: *On ne s'avise jamais de tout* and *Le Devin du village*. All eyes were turned to the favourite's box during these performances; there she sat, fair and dainty, in her radiant gown of "white satin, wavily striped and pleated with gold," and covered with "garlands of ruby-encrusted knots and spangles."

She was marvellously dressed, too, when she watched the review of the Royal Regiment, and the young officers swarmed round her phaeton, attracted by her gracious gaiety. With the Duchess de Valentinois and Madame de Montmorency she was invited to the dinner given by the second officer in command, the Count Du Châtelet. She was seated beside the King, taking the place of Madame la Dauphine, who had left with her aunts, the Princesses; and Monsieur de Choiseul, although Minister of War, had refrained from appearing either at the parade or at the banquet.

On October 20, Louis XV. and the Royal Family left Fontainebleau and spent three days at Choisy; on the 23rd the Court returned to Versailles. Her ladyship, though absorbed in the numerous details connected with the journey, did not lose touch with politics. She had enjoyed the services of a good teacher in her initiation into its mysteries, and could follow with interest all the phases of the Parliamentary crisis. The edict of December 3 was being prepared, and those who knew of its existence were busy estimating and balancing the forces at issue. Its

clauses were discussed not only in Cabinet Councils but also in the favourite's perfumed chamber, whose low ceiling and gilded bed, with its covering of heavy lace, suggested but little the council chamber.

Maupeou, having come to an agreement with Terray and La Vrillière, committed the scheme to writing and presented it to the King, while the Chancellor explained it to the Countess. With indefatigable energy he instructed and directed her, for he knew how much the King valued and listened to her counsels. He excited her pity by his account of the interrupted duties of many victims, such as men detained in preventive prisons, or plaintiffs spending their whole fortunes on suspended lawsuits, and he deplored the sinister example of disobedience set by the Parliaments, that had for so long thrown the country into confusion and was leading to the ruin of the monarchy. And the pretty childish voice of the Countess, that had hitherto only uttered words of love and gaiety, was heard discussing grave and serious matters. She bore a grudge against those philosophers whose books the Parliaments burnt, but whose theories they put into practice.

The preamble of the memorable edict, through which Madame Du Barry won such valuable insight into politics, was a royal claim to absolute power, and all Louis' pride may be read in its few words: ". . . . We hold our crown from God alone; the right to make laws for the conduct and governance of our subjects pertains to us only, independent of all, to be shared by none; we make over to our courts the right to examine, discuss and execute the laws. . . . Our wish to know of all that may have escaped our vigilance binds us always to maintain their custom of addressing petitions to us. . . . This custom, which is the prerogative of a wise government that desires only to reign by the light of reason and justice, should not become in the hands of our officers a right to resistance; their petitions have a limit and may not touch our authority. . . ."¹ There followed three long clauses which

¹ Flammermont, *Le chancelier Maupeou et les Parlements*, p. 117.

were enthusiastically praised by the Dauphin. "They are excellent," he wrote; "they show wherein lies true public right; I am delighted with Monsieur le Chancelier." But the magistrates would not submit to the edict, and petitions continued to be presented after the King's positive orders until the fall of the Parliaments.

The favourite turned with relief from these long, wearisome discussions with the Chancellor to an occupation that was much more to her taste, the choosing and making of her dresses. Every day some new frock was worn, necessitating many a conference with her dressmaker, Madame Sigly. Her petticoats had to be flounced with the same kind of lace as her skirts, the jewels on her slippers must match those in her attire, and her silk stockings had to be embroidered with gold. Then she was busied with the purchase of rare and curious things to stand on her ivory and lacquered *étagères*, and with ordering furniture for her rooms at Versailles or Louveciennes, such as "the twelve large armchairs upholstered in yellow Indian silk," which she acquired about this time. New Year was at hand, and she chose gifts for her friends, such as snuffboxes with miniatures lids, cameo rings or "small cases of veined agate." She also bought Sèvres ware at the Christmas exhibition of porcelain in the Royal apartments, presents that were a sure indication of her perfect taste and were always appreciated.

Madame Du Barry was at this time actively engaged in the arrangements for building a villa at Louveciennes where she could receive His Majesty with suitable comfort and luxury. Her only thought was to please the King, who, always difficult to satisfy, was now burdened not only with the cares of government, but also with the melancholy of age; he depended on the youth and vitality of the affectionate child, to whom fell the heavy task of actually determining his actions as well as of guiding his course.

In the coming crisis, which was destined to bring about the fall of Choiseul, the Countess by no means confined her activities on behalf of his enemies to raillery, but played an

active part, glimpses of the importance of which are afforded by recent researches. From the moment the Duke had violently declared his opposition to the mistress the Roué had conceived the daring notion of achieving his destruction, and had proffered his assistance to the party at Court working for that end. He persuaded them, probably by the help of his sister-in-law, to avail themselves of the services of one whom she had known when at the rue de la Jussienne. This was Favier, who, as a subordinate agent, had been concerned in certain diplomatic transactions. He was a writer of some distinction, a man of alert and supple temperament, who had become embittered by the smallness of a position that ill rewarded the various duties he had discharged. Favier was, in consequence, far from reluctant to supply the Barriens with the weapons they needed against a minister who habitually counted on his reputation with the King as an impeccable administrator and statesmanlike politician. A secret agent, perhaps the Roué himself, was sent to Brussels in March, 1769, where he wrote to Favier's dictation a very complete summary of facts incriminating Monsieur de Choiseul.¹ This anonymous memorandum, full as it was of accusations and compromising insinuations, became the arsenal whence the supporters of the Countess drew their ammunition for the fight before them.²

¹ The text is published in *La Révolution Française* of 1899, Vol. XXXVI., pp. 415-462, which also contains an article by Flammermont on Favier, discussing among other things his relations with Jean Du Barry and his mistress.

² A passage alluding to the amours of the King is worthy of quotation. After having established the Choiseuls' intrigues with the Court of Vienna, Favier adds: "The Court has justified their trust in it and recognised their services. More than once it has taken the trouble to intervene on their behalf, either by openly doing them a service, or by indirect insinuations; and, further, according to some who are well-informed on the point, it has not feared risking the displeasure of the King by its interference in matters concerning only his household and his private life. This has been done solely at the request of these gentlemen who thought it to their interest to become censors of morality for the first time in their lives."

The ground having thus been prepared as regards the King, events were precipitated by an imprudence of Choiseul. On the subject of an affair of slight importance, a difference between England and Spain as to the Falkland Isles, the minister thought fit to second the Madrid Cabinet in its proposals for war. As France was in duty bound to support her ally on account of the Family Pact, Choiseul saw in the matter an opportunity of making himself indispensable. The affair might, however, assume grave proportions: "I have demonstrated all its consequences to the Spanish ambassador," wrote Mercy to Maria Theresa, "and I flatter myself that the two of us together have succeeded in convincing the Duke de Choiseul of the erroneousness of his calculations." But it was rather late to turn back. On the other hand, Louis XV. wished for peace at any price, while the Parliament was openly insubordinate and refused to vote the necessary supplies for the expedition unless their demands were acceded to. Choiseul gave the King to understand that the exile of the Chancellor and of the Minister of Finance would make the Chambers much more manageable; the monarch, on the contrary, hoped that Maupeou and Terray would rid him of the Parliaments. The Chancellor, again, declared that unless Choiseul were dismissed war was inevitable, and that he himself would rather resign than submit to the will of the magistrates.¹ But Louis XV. was also anxious to fulfil his obligations towards Charles III., and was in consequence much harassed by doubts as to the course of action he should pursue. Madame Du Barry again stepped in, under circumstances that Monsieur de Talleyrand has presented in the most fanciful light.

The chief clerk in the Foreign Office was an Abbé de La Ville, who cherished the hope of rising to higher things.

¹ Flammermont did not know how far and in what manner Madame Du Barry and the Abbé de La Ville had intervened. He ascribed Choiseul's disgrace chiefly to the animosity of the Prince de Condé, who desired the Ministry of War for the Marquis de Monteynard. See the Duke de Broglie, *Le secret du Roi*, Vol. II., pp. 231 *et seq.*

Jean Du Barry discovered him, and without much trouble induced him to affirm that the Falkland Isles affair was primarily instigated to further the ministerial interest of the Choiseuls. The Abbé added that as matters now stood there was but one way out: "that the King should take it on himself to write a confidential letter to His Catholic Majesty. The reply would infallibly prove that the latter was inclined to avoid war by giving up the Falkland Isles, the cause of so much confusion."

Du Barry needed no more, and went immediately to his sister-in-law, whom he instructed in such wise that she was able to put the scheme before the King as if she had invented it herself. . . . She said to him: "I wager that if you have the courage to send for the Abbé de La Ville, and command him to tell you truthfully the prospects of such a direct application to the King of Spain, he will not be able to deny his approval of the step, thereby showing you the real value of the great fidelity with which you imagine you are served by Monsieur de Choiseul." The King was more and more struck with the intelligence of his mistress, and said: "Under what pretext can I send for this Abbé? The Duke de Choiseul will hear of it." "But how ingenuous you are," she replied. "I do not know him myself, and have never seen him, but I engage to bring him here, and, to put you at your ease, I promise he shall come at dusk, dressed like a layman with bagwig and sword." Amused at this prospect of seeing the most comic elements mixed up in a very grave affair, the King gave his consent. The Abbé was immediately told, and appeared the same evening in a suit of grey at the august and mysterious interview. A few moments later came the King who, after some jests on the subject of his costume, again established the distance between them, though his attitude was still that of a master who confides in his servant. He told the Abbé that he intended to write to the King of Spain, and required of him as his faithful subject a frank opinion on the letter, and on the real sentiments of his Catholic Majesty. The Abbé de La Ville replied without hesitation that if sovereigns were to begin arranging these matters they would soon be settled, and the work of their ministers

and ambassadors would be rendered almost superfluous. The King was satisfied with his answer, and proceeded to make a few reflections on Monsieur de Choiseul's administration. The Abbé, with a discretion that showed he was of the same opinion, refrained from speaking against his minister. The King dismissed the Abbé with every mark of goodwill, and he went away with his head full of agreeable illusions. His Majesty was thus determined to write to the King of Spain. As a feeling of pride had prevented him from asking the Abbé de La Ville to draft the letter, he began to think of suitable forms of expression. The first sentence was slow in coming. "You are doing it all wrong," said Madame Du Barry; "let me make you a rough copy." He laughingly consented. One of Mademoiselle Chon's couriers was at once sent to fetch Monsieur Du Barry from Luciennes that very night . . . to compose this important letter. Du Barry set out at midnight, and as it was very dark and the river had overflowed, his carriage upset, and for a moment he thought he was going to drown in the horse-pond of Marly, but finally he arrived, dried himself, and carried out his little task as well as he could. Madame Du Barry copied his draft of the letter in her own hand; next morning she made the King transcribe it at her writing-table, and her hairdresser was despatched on this important mission, a duty over which he spent only eighteen days.¹

The biased judgment of the writer is already shown in this account with its mass of ridiculous and unlikely details. But the intervention of the Abbé de La Ville is none the less well authenticated and was the immediate cause of the minister's downfall. The King, having sent for Choiseul, demanded an accurate account of the situation. The Duke said that by the end of January the troops would be ready. Pale with anger, the monarch exclaimed: "Monsieur, did I not tell you that I did not want war;" and on December 23 a messenger bore the following letter from the Most Christian King to His Catholic Majesty:

Monsieur my brother and cousin, your Majesty is not ignorant how the spirit of independence and fanaticism

¹ *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand*, Vol. V., pp. 561-563.

has spread in my kingdom. I have so far been patient and gentle, but now I am driven to extremity ; my Parliaments having forgotten themselves so far as to dispute my sovereign authority which I hold from God alone, I have resolved to be obeyed at all costs. War under the present circumstances would be a terrible evil to me and my people. But my great regard for your Majesty would make me forget all else for you. My ministers are no more than my instruments ; should I find cause to change them, be assured there would be no corresponding alterations in the relations between us ; as long as I live we are united. If your Majesty can without detriment to your honour make some sacrifices for the sake of peace, you will do humanity a great service, that, as I am at present placed, will also be one to me in particular.

The same day the King wrote the *lettre-de-cachet* apprising the Duke of his disgrace, but he did not decide to send it until December 24, when the Duke de La Vrillière brought M. de Choiseul the following note sending him into exile :—

Versailles, December 24, 1770.

I command my cousin, the Duke de Choiseul, to place his resignation of his positions as Secretary of State and as Superintendent of the Post in the hands of the Duke de La Vrillière, and to retire to Chanteloup until I issue further orders.

Louis.

The minister's downfall may thus be attributed principally to Madame Du Barry. Without her, perhaps neither Maupeou nor anyone else could have succeeded in lowering him so soon in the eyes of his sovereign. Moreover, he accelerated his disgrace by his support of the Parliaments, and by all kinds of indiscretions, " which we have seen him commit, both as minister and as courtier," wrote the ungrateful Kaunitz to Mercy. " Taking that into account I should have been much more surprised if he had been able to keep it up in the long run, than I am now at his disgrace. God grant at least that he may not be succeeded by an even greater marplot than he has been."

On Christmas Day Monsieur de Choiseul set forth on his

exile. The intervening twenty-four hours in Paris had been an absolute triumph. Both Court and town called at his house, and a crowd gathered to pay him homage. He was accompanied by the regrets of the populace as the man who had driven away the Jesuits, supported the Parliaments and, as it seemed, fought for liberty and the public welfare. All kinds of ballads were written commenting on the event, sometimes openly attacking Louis XV.

"At last," wrote Talleyrand in his memoirs, "Madame Du Barry began to play the great part of the favourite." Having finally rid herself of her dangerous enemy she could, with mind at ease, take possession of her delightful rooms at Versailles, whose gilded decoration harmonised so well with the clear colours of her furniture and tapestries, and with the blue of her exquisite porcelain. She still had indeed, to talk politics, and her evening audiences must have seemed very fatiguing to others of more delicate health; but now that she had grasped the complex machinery of State affairs, she listened with interest and gave sage counsel to her sovereign.

Then she returned to her frills and furbelows, to all her activities as a great lady who was careful of the fair fame of her household. Therein lay her charm, that she could be both grave and frivolous, able to give her attention for hours at a time to questions of high policy, and then to throw herself, wholeheartedly, like a child, into the whims and caprices suggested by her wayward fancy. At this critical time, when absolute monarchy was to conquer or die in its struggle with the "bigwigs," the King drew strength from the soul of his mistress and won composure under her youthful smiles.

Before strong action could be taken with regard to the Parliament, the new ministry had first to be formed. The difficulties involved were great; the incorruptible Count de Mury, whom all sides agreed to be the man for the War Office, refused to bend the knee to the popular idol. At length the post was given to the Marquis de Monteynard, a gentleman of the Prince de Condé's household and a protégé of H.R.H.

Madame Du Deffand wrote on January 9, 1771: "So far, only the War Office has been filled, and by a man of whom one hears little good; he obtained the post through the Prince de Condé. No one doubts that Monsieur d'Aiguillon will be given Foreign Affairs, the general belief being that his nomination only awaits the completion of negotiations. There are those who say that he is not loved by the Prince de Condé. The Abbé Terray is engaged with the Admiralty, but only temporarily. The Parliament affair is being discussed, both sides giving way slightly." One thing was certain, namely, that the mistress wished to fill the Council with her creatures; the Chancellor put her on her guard as to the secret proceedings of the Prince de Condé, and under the influence of Richelieu and Chon Du Barry she planned to raise to power that victim of recent persecution, the Duke d'Aiguillon.

In the meantime the Cabinet of Versailles anxiously awaited the King of Spain's letter. At last on January 10, 1771, Madame Du Barry learnt that a messenger had arrived from Madrid, and on the following day the Count de Fuentes delivered the letter to Louis XV. "Monsieur l'Ambassadeur," said the King, "I expected you yesterday evening." Charles III. wrote:—

Monsieur my brother and cousin, I have always been troubled at seeing the disobedience of the French Parliaments and their attempts to encroach on Royal authority; I have, therefore, nothing but praise for your Majesty's resolution to maintain your sovereign power and compel obedience. If for such an important purpose, that is of so much concern to your Majesty, help should be needed, all who are dependent on me would be at your service, only too happy to find an opportunity of giving active expression to my sentiments towards your Majesty's person, and of fulfilling the obligations of blood-relationship. For the same reason I shall do all within my power to avoid war. . . .¹

¹ The rest of the letter expresses an unconcealed regret at the dismissal of Choiseul, and a fear of the possible evil effects on the Family Pact. These events have been and still are very variously judged by historians.

No one was grateful to the King for his opportune intervention, except in the *Petits Cabinets*, where a gay and animated company assembled for dinner on the day the happy news was announced. They felt that for once the real interest of the country had been better served there than by Monsieur de Choiseul.

In greater spirits than ever the Countess made preparation for the celebration of the marriage of the Count de Provence. But money was lacking, Terray was at his wits' end to find it, and the suspended services of the Parliament fettered all activity. In order to break down and put an end to all resistance, Maupeou instigated the unprecedented action taken on January 19-20. Each member of the Parliament was woken that night by two musketeers and ordered to reply by simple *yes* or *no* to their question whether he would resume his duties. The majority of them refused, with the result that the Parliament was dissolved by decree of the Grand Council, followed by the exile of the magistrates. Public excitement knew no bounds; the severe measure, that struck at respected and popular men, roused a violent outcry against the Chancellor. This time the pamphlets scarcely mentioned the favourite; general opinion did not believe that such a revolution, the necessary outcome of the bitter conflict of that period between monarch and Parliament, could be the work of a woman.

As d'Aiguillon was still kept waiting for his nomination, people began to think that her ladyship's domination was yielding to the influence of a rival, but in February, when the heir to the throne of Sweden arrived in Paris, the extent of her power was made manifest. The future Gustavus III. travelled under the name of the Count de Gothland; he was enthusiastically received in Parisian salons, on which the recent political events had had a most stimulating effect. Women ardently assumed the task of interpreting the new theories; their gatherings became miniature States-generals in which the fundamental constitution of the State was discussed, and they showed themselves most eager to establish the principles of popular rights. The new Prince



Rostin pinxt.

GUSTAVUS III, KING OF SWEDEN

Gaucher sculpt.

Charming, the philosophical traveller, became the divinity of the hour.¹

Madame Du Barry shared the infatuation of the fair debaters, but at first when she received the august visitor, she was careful not to talk politics to him. For the first few days she aimed at appearing the prettiest and best-dressed of all, and she charmed the foreign prince by her dainty grace, her ready wit and her gentle simplicity. He saw her everywhere, at supper with the King, out hunting, on the journeys to Marly and Choisy. Sometimes, too, he saw the favourite, a radiant vision in her blaze of jewels, from the box at the Opera where the Countess d'Egmont jealously kept him.

He was at a performance at the Opera on the evening of March 1, when the Ambassador, the Count de Creutz, announced to him the sudden death of his father, Adolphus Frederick. But he did not leave France immediately, for he had only just opened negotiations with the Versailles Cabinet ; over and above this he had fallen under the spell of Paris and magnificent Versailles, he had been bewitched by the galaxy of charming young women who flattered and adored him. On March 6 he was entertained at the Academy of Science by d'Alembert ; on the following day he visited the French Academy, where the same d'Alembert gave a reading of a dialogue between Queen Christina and Descartes, the philosopher whom that young sovereign had so much admired. Madame Du Barry learnt with pleasure that, in spite of his intercourse with the friends of Choiseul, he held himself perfectly at liberty to visit her in the intimacy he preferred. Madame Du Deffand had nothing but praise for him. She has given an account, spirited and witty as usual, of the supper at his Ambassador's to which he invited her, and where she met Madame d'Aiguillon. "The fat Duchess," she wrote, "began to sing a song I had composed on my cask, after telling the King it was written in my style. . . . After supper . . . they made me

¹ See Geffroy, *Gustave III., et la Cour de France*, Paris, 1867, Vol. I., p. 110.

sing *L'Ambassade*, and then Madame d'Aiguillon told the King to ask me for the song *Les Philosophes*, after which she whispered to him that it was one of my own compositions ; and then the King and she and the whole company cried, ' Author, author ! ' as is done at the end of new plays."

On March 9, the Prince visited Saint-Germain and the engine at Marly ; in the evening he stopped at Rueil, the château of the famous cardinal, where he was received by Madame d'Aiguillon, the Duke her son, her daughter-in-law, the Count de Maurepas and the Duke de Nivernais. " Supper was made to look as if the whole entertainment was a happy accident." With ingenious verses invoking the shade of Richelieu, the dowager Duchess bade Gustavus III. welcome in the name of her great ancestor. Such an occasion could not but serve the interests of one whom an ambitious mother dreamt of as destined to the career of a Choiseul.

In the midst of pleasures and the entertainments given in his honour, Gustavus wisely did not forget the welfare of his country, and he was most assiduous in paying his court to Madame Du Barry. He was invited to supper in her little gabled rooms,¹ and for one whole evening, when alone with her, heaped on her the graceful compliments that won him such appreciation among women. He even presented her with a diamond collar for Mirza, her white greyhound. Many great ladies were jealous of all these attentions, but they tried in vain to estrange him from the Countess. As a token of his continued regard he used to send her every New Year's Day a magnificent little casket containing perfumed gloves.

Having won the support of the favourite, Gustavus III. left Paris on March 18, feeling assured of the success of his political arrangements. A week later, when he was crossing

¹ " The King of Sweden," wrote Mercy to Maria Theresa, " has certainly gone rather far in his political attentions to the favourite, and the Baron de Scheffer has complained of it. But the fact is also that he was deceived, and when the King of Sweden supped with the Countess Du Barry, he expected to meet the Most Christian King, who did not come." (Letter of April 16, 1771.)

the frontier, he wrote to Louis XV. the following letter, which was read with much satisfaction in the *Petits Cabinets* :

I cannot leave your Majesty's domain without once more expressing my gratitude for every evidence of the friendship with which you have honoured me, and whose value no sovereign knows better than I. If God wills that I reach my kingdom without untoward accident, I shall not relax my efforts to strengthen the bonds between us, that my personal feelings would henceforth have indissoluble. Above all, I shall have great pleasure in cultivating the correspondence with Your Majesty which you have so graciously promised to maintain. . . .

The atmosphere at Court "seemed calm and brilliant, though excitement was very great. . . . The authority of the Countess rose to such a pitch that nothing like it had ever been seen before." By the help of this authority Maupeou was able to pursue his attack on the magistracy, which was being vigorously transformed in place after place. In a few months, "except in Paris, all these famous Parliaments that had been so united and indestructible, were broken up, dissolved and reconstructed or not as the Chancellor pleased, an unheard-of state of affairs." The temporary Parliament, formed by the Council of State, did not work well; Maupeou created another Parliament out of the suppressed Court of Aids and the Grand Council, and instituted superior Councils. In carrying out his heavy task he was assisted by Monsieur de Boynes, the best lawyer of the day, whom he rewarded by obtaining his appointment as Minister of the Navy, a post that had been left vacant by the exile of Monsieur de Praslin on the same day as that of the Duke de Choiseul.

On April 13, the peers and members of the Council assembled in a *lit de justice*, presided over by the King, in order to ratify the actions of the chief magistrate. The Princes of the Blood showed their disapproval by their absence, only the Count de La Marche, as the friend of the favourite, being there. But his father, the Prince de Conti, headed the Parliamentary opposition together with the

Duke d'Orléans and the son of the latter, the Duke de Chartres. Condé, who kept in with both parties, was this time on the side of his cousins, especially as the mistress had for some time neglected the ambitions of His Highness.

The sitting opened at Versailles in the large Salle des Gardes on the morning of April 11. The staging of this memorable *coup d'état* was engineered with elaborate ceremonial. Louis XV. presided on a throne of purple velvet, bestrewn with fleurs-de-lys. "A gallery had been erected expressly for Madame Du Barry, who was present at the Assembly, and showed her warm approval of the Chancellor's speech." After the lawyer Séguier had spoken, the King "in a tone that made one tremble" said: "You have heard my wishes. I command you to conform to them and to resume your duties on Monday. My Chancellor will administer the oath to you to-day. I forbid you to take any further steps in the matter of the former officers of my Parliament. I shall never change."

On her way back to her apartments the favourite encountered the gallant Duke de Nivernais. "Did you hear?" she asked him. "The King said he will never change." "Yes, Madame, but he was looking at you," retorted the witty courtier.

This supreme effort freed Louis XV. from all manner of care and anxiety, thanks to the perseverance of his mistress and the energy of Maupeou. The Chancellor's enemies themselves were bound to recognise the wideness of his views and his decision of character; but all the same, seditious handbills and placards of a grossly insulting nature were disseminated. "At Marais, rue de Grand-Chantier," for instance, "a gallows had been painted on the wall, and from the gallows hung a man, under whom the words 'The Chancellor' were written." But Maupeou was content to be supported by Voltaire, who could not forgive the magistrates for their sentences on Lally, Calas and La Barre. A news-writer remarked on May 15: "That Monsieur de Voltaire has addressed a letter to Monsieur le Chancelier congratulating him on the success of his plans, appears

to be certain. He commends the comprehensive character, the importance and vast combination of these schemes, and praises the eloquence of his speeches. He concludes with the remark that Cardinal de Fleury through a treaty added Lorraine to French territory, that the Duke de Choiseul won us Corsica, but that Monsieur de Maupeou, greater than both these great ministers, has restored to the King the whole of France." Maupeou replied to the illustrious philosopher : " I thank you for the justice you have done my views ; your support encourages me to do still better."¹

After so much agitation the King longed for peace ; he wished to be free at last to taste the charm of living with his faithfully loved mistress. With increasing age the monarch's evil propensities had abated ; the *Parc-aux-Cerfs* and its attendant scandals were at an end ; his Majesty had parted with the deserted little house in the rue Saint-Médéric, where the bewitching O'Murphy had formerly lived.

But, though nothing further overshadowed the favourite's power, her heart was saddened and her pride thwarted by the aversion of the Dauphine. Perhaps, as has been supposed, she excited this hatred in the beginning by her rather disparaging remarks on the negligent attire and irregular features of the " red-haired " child. Maybe also she had allowed her roguish wit to play with too much freedom on the strange relations between the royal couple, whom no intimacy could unite. If so, the Archduchess assuredly heard of it, and could not forgive the " impertinent creature." Wounded in her vanity and her mind still further

¹ Shortly after this a rumour was circulated involving the name of the favourite : " Monsieur de Voltaire's followers assert that his return to the capital is certain. They say that Monsieur le Chancelier has persuaded Madame Du Barry to win from the King this long-desired favour. They add that the chief of the magistracy could not refuse the illustrious exile's petition after the zeal the latter had shown in his cause, and that he took into account . . . his usefulness in influencing people's minds." This information, with its attempts at irony, only succeeded in emphasising to the public mind how much the Chancellor and his supporter, the favourite, valued the countenance of such a man as Voltaire.

poisoned by Mesdames, proud Marie Antoinette's animosity towards the triumphant Du Barry may be easily understood. Mercy's clear and detailed letters to his Queen discredit the fantastic stories of the pamphleteers on this subject. Were they true, Her Royal Highness herself would have urged in reply to her mother's remonstrances the insulting remarks the Countess was said to have made with regard to the Empress.¹

The King suffered even more than the favourite from the awkwardness of the situation. To improve matters and reconcile the adversaries, to break the pride of the stubborn little Archduchess, no less was needed than the politic reprimands of Maria Theresa, the adroit diplomacy of Mercy and the entreaties of Kaunitz, who feared a breach of the Alliance.

Madame Du Barry counted on the arrival of the Countess de Provence to assist her in winning the favour of the Royal Family. She was charged with the formation of the household of the Princess, and, in order to give posts to all her creatures, she had ordained a service as luxurious and ostentatious as that of the Dauphine herself. "Monsieur le Dauphin has expressed annoyance at this arrangement, which he knows to be due to the designs of partial and intriguing persons," wrote Mercy, and the Ambassador added that the Archduchess "was much more careful in her conversation. For a long time I have not heard that she has said a word on the subject of Madame Du Barry and her advisers." She was, however, very prejudiced against the favourite, unreasonably so in the opinion of her mother. On the subject of her future sister-in-law, she wrote: "I very much fear that if she is at all stupid and not forewarned, she will be altogether on Madame Du Barry's side. Everything is done to win her over, for her mistress of the robes, who is to be Madame de Valentinois, is of that party."

¹ She was said to have read aloud a letter from the Ambassador, Louis de Rohan, indiscreetly communicated to her by the Duke d'Aiguillon, in which Maria Theresa was grossly insulted. See Boutry, *Autour de Marie-Antoinette*, Paris, 1906, p. 223.

These and other similar remarks disturbed the Empress, who desired above all that harmony should reign at Versailles.

The favourite bent all her wits to making the entertainments at the forthcoming wedding as sumptuous as possible, to attain which end she worked in concert with the Duke de Duras, the First Lord-in-waiting for the year, and with La Ferté, the Master of the Ceremonies. Presents were bought, fireworks ordered, plays to be acted chosen, balls, great dinners and receptions organised. "We are overburdened with work," wrote La Ferté in his diary. "I have arranged all the jewels of the wedding presents, which are very beautiful. The King, to whom I had the honour of showing at the *levée* the watch, the chatelaine and the snuffbox for Madame la Comtesse de Provence, was pleased with them." The chatelaine was the marvellous handiwork of the jeweller Gaillard; it was covered with brilliants, and "furnished with knives, scissors, tablets, a pencil-case, a six-inch rule, and other articles." Altogether it was worth 28,117 livres, and was the King's present to the bride.

On May 11 the Court left for Fontainebleau. "The following day the whole Royal Family travelled at a distance of two leagues in front of Madame la Comtesse de Provence."¹ Madame Du Barry followed triumphantly in the suite accompanied by her faithful friends. On the occasion of this princely wedding she wore her wonderful gold and silver dresses, and everywhere she was seen to take the first place. On leaving the chapel his Majesty received the cortège in his Cabinet. "The sight was most agreeable, and interesting by reason of the evidence it afforded of the good terms on which the King is with his family," wrote the Duke de Croÿ. "His distinguished appearance, his gaiety and his pleasure in marrying one of his grandchildren, were remarkable; he certainly did not look his sixty years." Play in the evening was most animated, the company being very numerous, and perhaps a trifle mixed; 200 louis were stolen from the pocket of Monsieur de Soubise. "The favourite

¹ Mercy to Maria Theresa, May 22, 1771.

looked like a lady born, and was not in the least embarrassed though of the King's party with all the Royal Family." The happy young bridegroom, who wore the gold-laced coat of his Order, displayed much wit. When the Dauphin was asked to give his opinion of his sister-in-law, he declared without beating about the bush that he "should not at all care to have her for a wife himself." The little Piedmontese was, notwithstanding, very agreeable, though she compared most unfavourably with the Dauphine in gracefulness and with the favourite in beauty.

Even in the midst of this whirl of festivities, Madame Du Barry did not forget her political enterprises. On June 5, judging the moment favourable, she wrung from the King his consent to the appointment of d'Aiguillon as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Chamfort has described, with greater satire than accuracy, how the event took place: "The fact of the matter is that the King never nominated Monsieur d'Aiguillon as Foreign Secretary, and the friends of the latter know it; for Madame Du Barry said to him: 'This business must come to an end, and to-morrow morning I want you to go to the King and thank him for having given you the post.' She said to the King: 'Monsieur d'Aiguillon is coming to-morrow to thank you for his nomination as Foreign Secretary.' The King said not a word in reply. Monsieur d'Aiguillon dared not go; but finally when commanded by Madame Du Barry, he went. The King said nothing to him, and Monsieur d'Aiguillon took up his duties on the spot."¹

Chanteloup was indignant, but Choiseul's friends had to put up with the new state of affairs. "Can I possibly have forgotten," wrote Madame Du Deffand to Walpole, "to tell you the news of Monsieur d'Aiguillon's nomination, which took place on the 5th of this month? He gave his first dinner yesterday, at which there were fifty-five persons; his mother, Madame d'Aiguillon, and his sister-in-law acted as hostesses. The Diplomatic Corps are all enchanted with our fat Duchess; she is indeed charming; her gaiety

¹ *Œuvres de Chamfort*, Paris, 1851, p. 68.

is so natural, so simple, so utterly devoid of pride and vain-glory, and she is so far from presuming that all the different parties are pleased with her, respect and love her, and wish her well."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon's elevation to power, although expected, enraged his adversaries, as was indicated by the attitude of the Count de Fuentès, the Spanish Ambassador, who wrote to the Court at Madrid asking to be recalled.¹ The Duke understood that he needed the support of the Austrian party in order to win prestige and political authority. Consequently he fell in with the views of Louis XV. and the favourite, and sought to overcome Marie Antoinette. To attain this object he had to circumvent Mercy, confidential adviser to the Empress. The latter would be all the more likely to countenance the Minister in that she had reason to keep on good terms with the Cabinet at Versailles on account of the proposed Partition of Poland. In her large handwriting she wrote a letter in rough and clumsy French, scolding her froward daughter, who refused to give way before the party of the Barriens :

"No cringing," said Maria Theresa, "do not flatter or court them, for you are as good as they at Court, but as a child you owe especial deference to his [the King's] wishes without enquiring into their origin and sifting their merits. It must be enough that the King has distinguished such and such a person for you to owe him or her respect, but no cringing. So far your actions have been attributed to the influence of Mesdames, but in the long run the King will be wearied." This severe language from her diplomatic mother is to be ascribed to d'Aiguillon's complaining to Mercy, at the order of Louis XV., of the ever growing hatred of the Dauphine for the mistress and her friends. The Princess "did not confine herself to refusing them the treatment due to such as are members of the Court, but in addition she used expressions against them full of satire and hatred, thus inflaming party spirit at Court ; Madame la

¹ See Flammermont, *Les correspondances des agents diplomatiques étrangers en France avant la Révolution*, p. 458.

Dauphine's bearing was, moreover, too childish and lively. All these circumstances have resulted in destroying the King's liking and tenderness for her, and some remedy for the awkward situation will have to be found."¹

Following the entreaties and example of the Countess de Provence, the young Dauphine relented a little; one June evening at Compiègne, when playing lansquenet at the King's card table, "she spoke to the favourite whenever the exigencies of the game so required, and did so with a good grace."² And on the day of the Royal Review she allowed Madame d'Aiguillon, the new minister's wife, to accompany her in her carriage.

But sudden changes in Madame la Dauphine's temper could always be expected, and the Countess was as yet by no means at ease. She was further subjected to the incessant importunities of the Roué; he had returned to his life of dissipation, run into debt and published his licentiousness abroad in every way. He travelled a great deal, visited all the fashionable watering-places, and altogether cut a very fine figure. He spent money like water, and displayed his mistress, Madame de Murat, with pride. As his manners deteriorated he was forsaken by his former friends, and was always to be found at the gaming table. Many anecdotes were current on the subject of his insolence, of which the following is an example: "He was as bare-faced as ever one day when he held the stakes at Spa. He seemed suspicious of the Dowager Electress of Saxony. . . . On the Princess expressing some surprise, the Count exclaimed: 'A thousand pardons, Madame, my suspicions cannot fall on you; you sovereigns only cheat for crowns.'"

Whatever Count Jean's ambitious projects may have been, his sister-in-law utterly refused to further them by exerting her influence over the King. But she had his claims satisfied with regard to the Corsican supplies, for which he had contracted under the name of Nallet; as

¹ Mercy to Maria Theresa, June 22, 1771.

² Mercy to Maria Theresa, July 24, 1771.

indemnity he was given from the Royal Treasury the handsome sum of 300,000 livres, on which he could live for some time in great style. The life-annuities and the contracts he received from the Abbé Terray as reimbursement for the advances he had made the favourite, he exchanged for the County of L'Isle-Jourdain. Madame Du Barry could at last believe that the moment had come to rid herself of him completely. She gave him to understand that he had received enough; Jean Du Barry himself described the change in their relations: "This was the time when Madame Du Barry . . . thought herself free from all further obligation towards me, and she stopped coming to see me on her visits to Paris, and excused herself from receiving me when my private affairs took me to Versailles."¹

In her anxiety not to embarrass the King the favourite never spoke of her mother, as Madame de Pompadour had continually done when she first came to Court. She was, nevertheless, solicitous for her well-being, and Madame Rançon, now Madame de Montrabé, possessed both mensevants and carriages. Mademoiselle Chon Du Barry continued to live with the young Countess as her chief confidant. On the maintenance of a numerous household, on presents, on pensions, on alms, on orders to artists, and especially on the enormous item of dress, Madame Du Barry expended most of the pension the King had decided to grant her. The amount of this pension was at first 200,000 livres a month, rose to 250,000 in 1771, then to 300,000, and was remitted to her by the Court banker, Monsieur de Beaujon, sometimes in cash, sometimes in the form of acceptances of the drafts with which she satisfied the demands of too pressing creditors.² Her fortune was administered and her

¹ The Roué adds in this letter to Malesherbes: "This state of affairs lasted two years. I hoped that the marriage of my son would effect some alteration. I then appeared *for the first time* before the late King, and in spite of the kindness with which he honoured me, I won not *the slightest expression of goodwill* from my sister-in-law. Since then I have only seen her once, on the second day of the King's illness." The Roué's letters to Madame Du Barry afford ample proof of the extreme coldness between them.

² The monthly accounts of Madame Du Barry's expenditure are

accounts kept by Maître Lepot-d'Auteuil, her lawyer. Need one add that, in spite of the enormous income she enjoyed during four years, she was always in arrears and in debt ?

Madame Du Barry, unlike her predecessor, drew very little on the Royal Treasury on behalf of her friends. All witnesses agree that she showed a restraint in this respect which was not imitated by Marie Antoinette's favourites. The protégé who exacted most of her could plead a superior cause, for he was none other than Gustavus III. himself, the King of Sweden. He needed money for his *coup d'état* against the nobility of his country, and he turned to Versailles for help. The demand was heavy on French finance, which was in a difficult position, but the mistress supported the monarch who had made himself so agreeable to her.

She had not failed to present the King with one of the portraits in which Drouais had delineated her fair and smiling beauty ; that the artist painted her expressly for that purpose is shown by his accounts, though the picture has not been found in any Swedish collection. Hall also drew for his master the lineaments of the favourite's pretty face in one of his charming miniatures.¹ The Countess d'Egmont was greatly distressed at the rumours of the good terms on which her ladyship was with Gustavus. She wrote on June 27, 1771 : " I believe the time has come for me to tell your Majesty of a rumour that has affected me most painfully. You are said to have asked for Madame Du Barry's portrait, and even to have written to her for it. I have roundly denied it, but the truth of the story has been so positively affirmed that I beseech you to authorise me to do so at once." And later : " I beg you to make it possible for me to send you my portrait. I cannot do so without your word of honour that you have not, and never will have, that of Madame Du Barry." ²

kept in the *Bibliothèque nationale*, the first dated one being for the month of July, 1770.

¹ In the collection of the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan.

² The Countess d'Egmont's portrait, which was sent to Gustavus in 1773, was also one of Hall's miniatures.



MADAME DU BARRY
From a miniature by Hall

Gustavus III. was not able to give his word of honour, and Madame d'Egmont repeated her anxious question in vain. Fairness demands that her spite should not be ascribed only to jealousy, but also to her supreme hatred of the woman who represented the triumphant party at Court. Richelieu's daughter was a Republican, and she loved Gustavus, "the hero of her heart," because, theoretically at least, he appreciated, as she did, the philosophy and the sentimental liberalism of Rousseau. Even in her last illness she used to write to him on political themes, romantically exalted letters, perhaps, but inspired by noble thought. And her Gustavus answered more willingly than any of the other Parisian women with whom he kept up this style of correspondence. At length he began to weary of his charming Mentor's serious disquisitions, as he never would have done of the fresh little notes Madame Du Barry might have written to him, had his fair friends not forbidden him to receive them.

The favourite was continually tossed from one extreme of emotion to the other, at one moment calm and confident, the next fearful and despairing. For the little Countess de Provence, on whom the Barriens had based their hopes, disconcerted them by her circumspection, whilst her clever husband adroitly flattered each of the two parties in turn. Only the support of the Dauphine promised security, and the mistress returned again and again to the task of winning it.

On Sunday, July 28, the Duchess de Valentinois, Mistress of the Robes to the Countess de Provence, gave a grand supper at Compiègne, to which Madame Du Barry and Mercy were both invited. The Ambassador sent a prompt account of the interview to the Empress: "I arrived there with the Papal Nuntio and the Sardinian Ambassador, who were also invited.¹ We found the company included the Duke and Duchess d'Aiguillon, the Duke de La Vrillière, a Lady of the Bedchamber, other Ladies-in-Waiting to the

¹ Mercy did not mention that the Spanish Ambassador declined the invitation. A few days later Caracciolo, the Neapolitan Ambassador, made his excuses when invited to a similar supper. See Flammermont, *op. cit.*, pp. 419-421.

Countess de Provence, and the Countess Du Barry. This was the first time I found myself actually in the presence of the woman. The Sardinian Ambassador spoke to her first in the manner of one well acquainted with her, while the Nuntio showed much eagerness to join in the conversation ; I thought it my duty to observe greater discretion, and did not begin to talk at ease with the favourite until she had addressed a few words to me. She treated me with more distinction than she did the others. . . .” Monsieur de Mercy often repeated these last words with some self-complacency, but always discreetly, without owning to the charm of “the woman,” and even depreciating it to Maria Theresa ; but then his whole attitude towards her was coloured by consciousness of his position as the servant of the Empress.

At the same supper the Duke d’Aiguillon invited the Count, in the name of the King, to call next day at the favourite’s. “You know I am not so placed here that I can see him with ease,” said His Majesty, “so ask him to come and see me at Madame Du Barry’s.” “I could say nothing,” said Mercy, “though I was determined not to leave the other Ambassadors in ignorance of the step I intended to take ; but I learnt that the Sardinian Ambassador had already expressed to the Duke d’Aiguillon his desire to call on the favourite, while the Ambassadors of England, Venice and Holland had also decided to pay her a visit.” Such diplomatic receptions, in fact, merely followed the precedent set by Madame de Pompadour.

On Tuesday, at her toilette, Marie Antoinette complimented Mercy, in a low voice, “on the fine company” he kept. At seven o’clock in the evening he was admitted to the apartments of the Countess, and was most graciously received. His Majesty had not yet arrived, and thus she had time to tell him of her grievances against the Dauphine, assuring him that the present state of affairs was extremely painful to her. The King entered by a secret staircase, and turned to the visitor saying : “So far you have been Ambassador for the Empress ; I now beg of you to be mine, at

least for the present." And with the embarrassment that he always showed when called on to give a direct explanation, he complained of the young Princess, and especially of Mesdames who had proved such misguided counsellors. He requested that she should "grant Madame Du Barry exactly the same treatment as everyone else who had been presented was entitled to expect, assuring him that any other conduct created scenes at Court and excited party spirit and intrigue."

After this audience Marie Antoinette had to submit to still more pressing admonitions from Mercy. The Dauphin thought she ought to speak to the Countess, and she promised to do so on the first possible occasion. On September 11 the favourite joined the party of the Dauphine at cards, Mercy also being present. At the end of the evening the Princess took leave of the ladies, addressing a few gracious words to each; she was moving towards Madame Du Barry when she was interrupted by the imperious voice of Madame Adelaide, who had noticed her intention: "Come, it is time to go! We shall wait for the King at Madame Victoire's." And the Royal child obediently followed her aunt without saying a word.

Louis XV., who was to sup with his family after the Council meeting, went first to hear how the favourite had been received, and guessed the humiliation she had suffered from the sadness of her expressive eyes. In order to screen his Archduchess, Mercy explained the scene as well as he could to d'Aiguillon, while the mistress, with forced gaiety, presided over the supper to which she had invited the Ambassadors. When His Majesty returned he took the Austrian envoy aside, saying: "Well, Monsieur de Mercy, did you speak to Madame la Dauphine? Your counsels do not seem to have resulted in much; I shall have to come to your help!" The tone in which he spoke was bitterly ironical, and without awaiting reply the King turned his back.¹

¹ P. de Nolhac, *op. cit.*, pp. 198 *et seq.*, makes full use of Mercy's detailed reports on the situation to the Empress, and more concise letters to Kaunitz.

As soon as Maria Theresa heard of what had passed, she wrote from Schönbrunn :

You only act as your aunts tell you to do. . . . I respect them, I love them, but they have never known how to win love and respect from their family or from the people, and you will follow in their footsteps. What is this fear and embarrassment at speaking to the King, who is the best of fathers, or to those to whom you are advised to speak ? . . . You have allowed yourself to become so enslaved that the voice of reason, of duty even, cannot help you. I can no longer be silent after Mercy's communication. What good reason can you give for not having done as he told you that the King desired, and your duty demanded of you ? None. You should not think of the Barry in any other light than that of a lady who has been admitted to Court, and to the society of the King. You are his chief subject, and owe him obedience and submission ; you ought to set an example to the Court in carrying out the wishes of your master. If any cringing or familiarity were expected of you, not I nor any one would advise it ; but a casual word, not for her ladyship's sake, but for your grandfather, your master, your benefactor ! . . . If you give way to this feeling I foresee much unhappiness for you ; your days will be made miserable by petty intrigues and quarrels. . . .

The young Princess rebelled against such strange precepts, for, though her conduct had been influenced by Mesdames de France, it was chiefly inspired by her feelings of injured pride and vanity.

At this time there appeared in England the *Gazetier cuirassé*, a pamphlet of unbounded licentiousness, whose calumnies, however coarse, are largely responsible for the legends that have grown up around the person of Madame Du Barry.¹ The author, Théveneau de Morande, was a French refugee in London, who attacked the most prominent people, unless they paid a ransom to escape his scan-

¹ So says Pidansat de Mayrobert in his *Anecdotes*. The little pamphlet, which was sold at not less than a guinea, is mentioned in a letter from London of August 7, 1771, in the *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. V., p. 296. See Paul Roubiquet, *Théveneau de Morande*, p. 33.

dalous lies. The book was brought to the favourite's notice, but she thought best to ignore it for fear of rousing the anger of the King. Her silence only induced Morande to renew his libels.

There was an exquisitely carved but empty frame at the Salon of 1771 that was intended for a portrait of Madame du Barry. This time she was drawn as a muse, but a muse so lightly draped that when the picture arrived there was a general outcry, although the public were accustomed to transgressions of this description. The painting was withdrawn until the artist had replaced by a long robe the veil that revealed rather than concealed his sitter's white loveliness.¹ The smiling goddess was shown resting on her lyre and scattering roses. She was extravagantly tall, measuring, indeed, six feet and a half, majestic as a classic statue of Venus, but losing thereby the womanly charm of her delicate beauty. And nothing in her face "did justice to the attractive play of Madame Du Barry's features." No doubt the first coat of white, with which the painter aimed at achieving uniformity in his colouring, was responsible for the dulness of her complexion. The background was well conceived, in spite of its details, which were somewhat too elaborate. Diderot, with no thought of its being a sad omen, observed a "line round the neck separating the head from the body."

Painting, however, was not the only art to celebrate the beauty of the mistress; Pajou exhibited a bust in terra-cotta, the first step towards the charming marble in the Louvre, which was not completed until 1773. "In the portrait of Madame la Comtesse Du Barry," wrote the *Mercure*, "a bust in terra-cotta by Monsieur Pajou, all may see the charm of beauty, while to the pupils of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts it will further recall the countenance of their protector."² The bust served as a model for

¹ *Mémoires secrets*. For this second work, which is mentioned in his account, the artist asked 15,000 livres.

² Diderot does not mention the bust in his account of the Salon. In spite of some collectors' belief to the contrary, Pajou's terra-cotta has not yet been found.

several copies which were made in porcelain by the Sèvres factory.

The Royal Family refused to make peace, for her sisters and nephews all agreed with Madame Adelaide. Time, perhaps, would cool her furious resentment; was she not known to have been "consumed with hatred of Madame de Pompadour, only to throw herself finally into the arms of the latter, yielding so unrestrainedly that she even went so far as to leave the choice of a confessor in her hands." The condition of affairs roused the King's anger, and he complained to his mistress and spoke, egoist that he was, of the gentleness of the late Queen, who had never opposed his wishes.

Before leaving for Fontainebleau, in the beginning of October, 1771, Madame Du Barry made another attempt to come to terms with Mercy. She had an interview with him in which she spoke of the difficult situation created by the ill-will of the Dauphine. Her attitude towards him was that of a trustful child, and she thus secured the interest of the Ambassador whom a different demeanour would have alienated. She confessed "that she had thought it her duty to explain the state of affairs to the King, whom she had begged for permission to avoid coming into the presence of Mesdames, whether at Versailles or during any of the shorter sojourns at the other palaces to which the Princesses were allowed to accompany His Majesty." The King, embarrassed as usual by a direct question, had not replied; following the example of his daughters when making even the smallest of requests, the mistress wrote to him and was answered thus: "You are wrong to think I love you less because I did not answer you; I love you very much, as always." The clever young woman gave the Ambassador these words to read, and he communicated them to Marie Antoinette. The King then went on to complain of his daughters, whom he proposed to exclude from the little journeys, only admitting the Dauphine and the Countess de Provence. This explains why the Court went straight to Fontainebleau that year without stopping at

Choisy ; for in the smaller châteaux, where the size of the suite had to be reduced, frequent encounters were unavoidable, and friction was aggravated.

Again the favourite gave herself up to the theatre and the chase, to all the excitements of Court life ; and in the intoxication of her triumphs she soon forgot her troubles. Monsieur d'Aiguillon's nomination was celebrated by all the ambassadors, except those of Spain and Naples,¹ by dinners which they gave in turn in honour of the new Secretary of State. On September 30, Madame Du Barry invited him to her new villa at Louveciennes, an architectural gem to which Ledoux had just given the finishing touches.

At the request of the minister his mother was of the company,² with Mesdames de Mirepoix, de Valentinois, de Montmorency and de Choiseul, the latter a relative and enemy of the disgraced Duke. The other guests included the Chancellor, the Ministers, and nearly all the Diplomatic Corps. At Chanteloup the exiles, who kept themselves well in touch with all the happenings at Court, were filled with indignation that the Dowager Duchess d'Aiguillon should have visited the "Sultana." The Duchess de Choiseul, in spite of her gentleness, wrote to Madame Du Deffand as follows, for she loved her fickle husband : "Whatever you say, my dear 'grand-daughter,' Madame d'Aiguillon has defiled herself by her action, and has lowered my respect for her ; neither powerful influence nor consideration should make one excuse an infamy."

The witty Marquise smiled at this letter, she who had seen so much during the Regency as well as during the present reign, and could remember when that very same little Duchess had been the inseparable friend of Madame de

¹ The new minister's enemies did not, however, fail to do justice to his qualities. Caracciolo, the Neapolitan Ambassador, wrote, for instance, in a confidential letter of September 20 : "The Duke d'Aiguillon is a man of merit, clever and eminently capable."

² "The fat Duchess is dining at Luciennes with the Sultana," wrote Madame Du Deffand to Walpole, "the pasha, her son, has demanded this condescension of her ; she refused for a week, but had to give way or quarrel with him." This seems rather exaggerated.

Pompadour. She wrote to Walpole: "Our allies [the Choiseuls] are strangely scandalised that the fat Duchess d'Aiguillon should have dined at Luciennes; 'grand-mama' [Madame de Choiseul] says she 'has defiled herself by her action.' The fear which seems to me to possess her of being outdone in heat and rancour by the powers (as I call Mesdames de Beauvau and de Grammont) leads her into the most absurd and laughable exaggerations."

Madame Du Barry was the dispenser of honours as well as favours. The Duke de Cossé, who was later to become so dear to the Countess, asked her on behalf of his wife, Diane de Nivernais, for the post of Mistress of the Robes to the Dauphine, which had become vacant on the death of the Duchess de Villars; and, in spite of Marie Antoinette's fear at having a dependant of the mistress about her person, a fear that in this case was not justified, the favour was granted.

Another of the favourite's protégés, the Baron de Montmorency, had applied to her for help in the delicate matter of a difference with Madame Adelaide. He was first gentleman-usher to the Princess, and on his recent appointment as Lieutenant-General of the Aunis, she had unceremoniously ordered him to leave her household. The Baron excused himself on the plea that only the King could release him from the oath he had taken. Madame Adelaide sent for the Duke de La Vrillière and enjoined on him to obtain the dismissal of her gentleman-usher. But the mistress intervened, and Montmorency kept his place. "Madame Adelaide," wrote Mercy to his sovereign, "has suffered the mortification of being worsted in a matter that had attracted the attention of the courtiers."

For November 9 a comedy-ballet, *Zemire et Azor*, was arranged, the last performance at Fontainebleau. The play was of particular interest to the favourite, for Grétry had dedicated it to her.

The libretto by Marmontel recalled the old story of Beauty and the Beast, and the naïve miracle wrought by love; Azor, a young Persian Prince and King of Kamir, was given

unrivalled beauty by his fairy godmother, but because he boasted of this magnificent gift she deprived him of it. He was changed into a monster, but Zemira, the gentle daughter of a merchant of Ormus, loved him and broke the charm. The play with its magical Eastern setting lent itself to the finest effects, and on the night of the performance the favourite in her gold-bespangled brocade and starry diadem seemed, like the princess of a fairy-tale, to be part of the enchanting story.¹

When the Court returned to Versailles, Madame de Valentinois gave an entertainment in honour of the Countess de Provence, who was at La Muette recovering from an attack of smallpox. Madame Du Barry was among the guests, and, though the anecdote writers have denied it, she received "a most distinguished reception from the Countess de Provence in the inner apartment where the latter appeared before showing herself to the assembled company." A little play was acted full of praises of the Princess. The Chancellor, who was present, was given his share of the songs, which were the picturesque and flattering work of an Academician, the Abbé de Voisenon; the Sibyl announced to the French the coming of the golden age as follows:

Malgré Discorde et ses noirs émissaires,
De la Justice ardera le flambeau;
A la Chicane on rognera les serres,
Et Thémis sera sans bandeau.

But above all the divinity of the hour was praised:

C'est la beauté
Qui nous corrige et nous éclaire,
C'est la beauté
Qui nous mène à la vérité.²

¹ Mademoiselle de Lespinasse wrote to Condorcet on November 15: "Azor, or Beauty and the Beast, has had the most brilliant success of any play seen at Court. The Count de Creutz says everyone was intoxicated with delight. He himself can think of nothing else and sings it unconsciously." Charles Henry, *Lettres inédites de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse*, p. 75.

² Mercy, who sent the text to Vienna, said that "the two kick-shaws had shocked the public extremely, and displeased the Royal Family."

The entertainment was the cause of some excitement. The Duke d'Orléans, who was the Abbé's patron, objected to his sycophancy towards Maupeou. Voisenon, in spite of the fact that he had at first accepted the compliments of the Court, put the whole responsibility for the unfortunate lines on Favart ; but, as the news-writers inform us, " the latter, shared everything that he had with the Abbé, even to his wife."

The noise made by these petty bickerings was swallowed up in the excitement of the great news that the King had discharged the Duke de Choiseul from his post as Colonel-General of the Swiss and Grison regiments. This action, which deprived him of his remaining dignities, was the inevitable result of his continual bravado. The ostentatious life led by the " allies," the host of visitors who came to pay their court at his magnificent château and the entertainments and plays given them, the songs and epigrams attacking His Majesty and the Barriens, all came to the ears of the monarch, who was much displeased with the insolence displayed by his disgraced minister.

The Abbé Barthélemy's letters to Madame Du Deffand are a proof of the continual coming and going of visitors at Chanteloup. " Here comes Madame la Comtesse de Grammont ; to-morrow we shall see Mesdames de Chabannes and d'Ossun, I believe ; then Monsieur le Marquis and Madame la Marquise de Laval. Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne de Talleyrand, Monsieur de Schomberg, and Monsieur de Poix are also here ; Mesdames de Brionne, de Ligne and Mademoiselle de Lorraine are leaving on Sunday, I think ; and Monsieur de Schomberg in a few days. As you see, a perpetual ebb and flow ; I might imagine myself in the harbour of a port watching a crowd of vessels of all nations continually come and go. . . ." The gentle Duchess de Choiseul complained of all the commotion to the old Marquise, but she nevertheless felt flattered and made the indiscreet agitators very welcome. It became the fashion to pay one of these visits ; " Madame de Luxembourg," wrote Madame Du Deffand, " left last

Monday for Chanteloup, where she will stay a week ; nothing can be more comical or stranger than this visit, which she must have undertaken for the sake of recording it in the history of her life ; certainly she was not inspired to make it by a feeling of friendship."

Those who wished to go to Chanteloup had to ask permission of the King ; he usually replied : " Do as you please," and they went. " The Duke's friends are very foolish," said Madame Du Barry. Their imprudence sometimes cost them dear ; the Prince de Beauvau, for instance, lost his position as Governor of Languedoc on account of his over-zealous friendship. " He is profoundly miserable," wrote sarcastic Madame Du Deffand, " I think him as unhappy as our first father. Perhaps he is even more miserable ; but most wonderful to relate, he does not in the least repent ; I vow he will always eat every apple that his Eve [Madame de Beauvau] may offer ; there are moments when this grieves me, but I am immediately consoled at the thought of their extreme satisfaction with the glory to which they lay claim. They are stripped nearly bare, they have no refuge, but they are heroes. Their creditors do not share the glory ; every one is mad."

As a result of all these follies, Monsieur de Choiseul was commanded to resign his commission as Colonel-General of the Swiss Guards to Monsieur Du Châtelet. The Duke had not, indeed, valued the position very highly, and thought, therefore, to draw every possible advantage from his resignation. In a very respectful letter to the King he begged to be recalled from exile, asked for the sum of three millions to be drawn on the Exchequer, for a life interest in the forest of Hagenau, and finally for a pension for the Duchess his wife, having spent, he said, the enormous fortune of the Crozats in honour of the King on his embassies and during his tenure of office.

The Count Du Châtelet, an intimate friend of the Choiseuls, was to present the letter to his Majesty, but Louis XV. objected to deal directly with the matter. Monsieur d'Aiguillon refused to see the petitioner, and, strange though

it seemed, his only hope lay in Madame Du Barry. The favourite granted the Count an audience, and from the first he was astonished at her frankness, her goodwill, her understanding of affairs. Her kindness was, in fact, the subtle coquetry of a woman who wished to revenge herself in the most elegant way possible on her implacable enemy. When Monsieur Du Châtelet pleaded she should give ear to the spirit of moderation that harmonised so well with grace and beauty, she replied "that she was by no means bent on injuring" the Duke, "that she would indeed be charmed to see him back again." She added "that she had in the beginning done all she could to warn him," that he ought to have felt "the impossibility of matters continuing on the footing of recent times, not on her account, but on the King's, who was perpetually attacked on the subject of his affections."

The Count pleaded the cause of his friend to the best of his ability. "I blamed her advisers," he wrote. "She answered me that we should rather speak of yours; that . . . at the time of the interview she had with you, she told you she had no advisers, and that, in fact, she had at that time no one of importance about her other than the Marshal de Richelieu." And here the flatterer found occasion to pay her two adversaries charming compliments.

Monsieur Du Châtelet left the favourite, having won from her a promise that she would obtain an audience of His Majesty; the Viscount Du Barry would be sent to inform him of the King's decision. At the first words of the Countess Louis XV. was transported with rage, and for two hours and a half she withstood the storm, justifying the Duke's demands point by point. Then she had a violent scene with the Duke d'Aiguillon. Failure now would have struck a blow at her vanity; she received the Count Du Châtelet three times, spoke again and again to the King, sent for the Minister. "He was with the King at Madame Du Barry's. Those who were there assert that there is some dispute between her and Monsieur d'Aiguillon, that the King had a very short but lively conversation with him,

and that Madame Du Barry left in a very bad temper." But negotiations progressed, the details were agreed to, and finally on December 14 the Count gave Monsieur de Choiseul the good news.

The exile sent in his resignation and obtained in exchange the required compensation. Monsieur Du Châtelet had only praise for the young favourite ; public opinion itself had to recognise her generosity. The ballads of Versailles and Paris were this time sung in her honour :

Chacun doutait en vous voyant si belle
Si vous étiez ou femme ou déité ;
Mais, c'est trop sûr, votre rare bonté
N'est pas l'effort d'une simple mortelle.
Quoi qu'ait écrit jadis, en certain lieu,
Un roi prophète en sa sainte demeure,
Quoi qu'un poète en ait dit, la vengeance
N'est que d'un homme, et le pardon d'un Dieu.

Yet the Duke wrote in his memoirs : " Neither I nor Madame de Choiseul thanked her for it ; the injustice, and especially the harshness of our treatment exempted us from all gratitude."

CHAPTER IV

THE ALL-POWERFUL FAVOURITE

Projected Marriage of the King to the Favourite—The Partition of Poland—Maria Theresa's Fears—Reconciliation of Marie Antoinette and Madame du Barry—Gustavus III.'s *coup d'état*—Marriages of the Viscount and the Chevalier Du Barry—The Salon of 1773—Marriage of the Count d'Artois—Final Intrigues—Illness and Death of Louis XV.

“**T**HE Countess Du Barry's ascendancy over the King wellnigh knows no bounds,” wrote Mercy to Maria Theresa in December, 1771; and, as a matter of fact, all Europe was beginning to take the favourite's power into account. The Cabinet of Vienna treated her with caution; the Kings of England and Prussia made advances to her, and Gustavus III. relied on her for protection in his difficulties. Nor were these proud triumphs all; she won gentler victories as well, for the Dauphine deigned to speak to her at her visit on New Year's Day.

Since the marriage of the Count de Provence, Marie Antoinette had occupied the Queen's rooms at Versailles, and she gave her audiences in the vast bedchamber with its canopied bed behind the gilded railing. Thither came Madame Du Barry on January 1, 1772, accompanied by Madame de Mirepoix and the Duchess d'Aiguillon. After the customary curtseys the Dauphine looked towards the favourite and said politely: “There are many people at Versailles to-day,”¹ after which the King's circle of friends could talk of nothing but the spirit of the lovable young Princess. But though the dominant party rejoiced, the

¹ In his report of January 23, 1772, Mercy relates how on New Year's Eve he had used every possible argument to induce the Dauphine to be kind to the favourite next day. “I obtained a promise, not without much difficulty. The chief point was that Mesdames were not consulted, and the outcome was most fortunate.”



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little Archduchess had to pay dearly for her courage ; Mesdames, her aunts, were furious, and the Countess de Narbonne went so far as to speak of her treachery. Though thus deserted she yet wrote to the Empress :

My dearest mother,—I have no doubt that Mercy has informed you of my conduct on New Year's Day, and I hope that you were satisfied. You may be sure that I shall always sacrifice my every prejudice and aversion as long as I am asked to do nothing contrary to the principles of decency and honour. A breach between my two families would be the misfortune of my life ; my heart would always be on the side of my own, and my duties here would be very difficult to carry out. I tremble at the idea of such a thing, and trust that it may never happen, that at least I may not be the cause. . . .

The unfortunate, rather than insulting, expression, " contrary to the principles of honour " drew on her an exasperated reply from her august parent. " I have been very mistaken," wrote the Dauphine again, " in what I told you of the Count de Provence ; he has much disgraced himself in the Madame de Brancas affair. His wife follows his example in everything, but only through fear and stupidity, for I believe her to be extremely unhappy." Marie Antoinette's brother-in-law was, in fact, playing a double game, and while keeping in with the opposite party his ambition led him to serve the interests of the Barriens. The Madame de Brancas referred to had recently been dismissed from the household of the Countess de Provence on account of an impertinence towards the favourite. Apparently, the idol was henceforth to be unassailable.

Mercy hastened to reap advantage from the gratitude of Madame Du Barry, who was enchanted with the favour won from the Princess. He became a frequent visitor at the *Petits Cabinets*, and the gift of a valuable box from Kaunitz, which he showed the King, provided him with an opportunity of singing the praises of his chief to the mistress. He wrote to the Minister : " I am in high favour with Madame Du Barry ; she is beginning to listen to me, and

has not at all exposed me on the subject of certain minor political proposals which I have ventured to put forward with every precaution, solely for the purpose of seeing how the land lay. I hope to make use of this woman, if only Madame la Dauphine will be good enough not to frustrate my schemes by any inconsiderate action."

The Ambassadors were right to deal cautiously with the Countess, who was now all-powerful at the Court of France. She was the chief supporter in the Versailles Cabinet of the threatened interests of Gustavus III. "In this terrible position," wrote Monsieur de Creutz to his sovereign, "I propose the following course of action to Your Majesty . . . 1st, to write a most moving letter to the King, a very flattering one to Madame Du Barry, and one full of trust and friendship to the Duke d'Aiguillon. This is of the greatest importance." The letters were written and worked wonders. Creutz joyfully wrote to Gustavus that "the lady who enjoyed the confidence of the King" took the most lively interest in Swedish affairs. "She is always speaking of them to me," he added, "and has bidden me deliver her good wishes to Your Majesty."

Madame Du Barry was not satisfied with only assuring the Swedish Ambassador of her goodwill towards the young King. She acted, and informed Count Scheffer of her actions, having become acquainted with him at the time of Gustavus' stay in Paris, when she had also invited him to supper together with the Prince.

I should have written to you yesterday, Monsieur le Comte, as I promised, had not the King's day been so fully occupied that he could not possibly find time to reply to His Swedish Majesty. Pray believe, Monsieur, that I am giving my ceaseless attention to all that may interest your master; I have been most moved at hearing of his trouble, and I beg of you to assure him of my sympathy. I hope to-morrow the King will give a reply that will satisfy all the wishes of the King of Sweden. I am, Monsieur,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

La Comtesse Du Barry.

In supporting the Swedish King, the Countess fell in with Louis' secret wish ; in spite of all, he attached importance to the old European balance of power which Catherine and Frederick sought to destroy in furthering their own ends. He was pleased that Gustavus should master his government, because he wished to see him triumph over his watchful enemies ; and to save him from the hornet's nest, Louis allowed him to draw on the French Treasury. But when once the Cabinet at Versailles had yielded to Madame Du Barry's importunities, the young King had to be asked to hasten the operations which were to foil the covetousness of the Northern League.

While the King of Sweden was thus contending with his ambitious nobility, Versailles gave itself up to all the joys of the Carnival. The favourite queened it everywhere, and overtaxed her powers to such an extent that she was forced to take to her bed. Madame de Choiseul wrote to Madame Du Deffand that the mistress was feared to be suffering from an attack of measles, and the latter informed Walpole on February 17, 1772, that the Countess was afflicted with a terrible cold. Everyone took the greatest interest in her ladyship's precious health, and the gazetteers embellished their anecdotes with their usual felicity. The story went that the physicians had decided " the invalid should be bled. The latter showed much reluctance in submitting to their decision, and treated them to all the grimaces in which pretty women indulge. His Majesty, who was present at the discussion, pressed her to give way to necessity, and, as she still objected, he slapped her lightly." ¹

The Countess allowed herself to be tended, glad of the enforced rest which for a moment interrupted the feverish course of her career. Louis scarcely ever left her, and rejoiced in the charm of increased intimacy with his sweet and loving friend. In her floating white gown, trimmed with silver lace " and little knots of flowers," with her bare feet stuck in satin slippers and her long hair framing

¹ " The quarrel only proves the strength of his passion for her," adds the writer of the *Anecdotes*.

her pale face, she was more beautiful than ever. One of her women read aloud to her, probably from one of the numerous histories which La Beaumelle had just bought her. Among them were such books as the *Memoirs of Brantôme*, *Bassompierre* or *Retz*, diaries of the reigns of *Henri III.* and *Henri IV.*, and chronicles for the years 1768 and 1769, all of which dealt with subjects of general interest at a time when Madame de Mesmes could write: "The Chancellor has for six months been making certain people learn the history of France, who might perhaps have died without knowing it."

But the favourite's library did not consist exclusively of such books as the "*Meditations*" of Marcus Aurelius or the "*Enchiridion*" of Epictetus. There were also the extravagant Crébillon's "*Le Sopha, La Nuit et le Moment*," and the courteous Dorat's "*Baisers*," which the Viscount Adolphe read to her. Mademoiselle Chon used to play her favourite pieces on the harpsichord, or Madame de Mirepoix, who, according to Madame Du Deffand, recited so well, declaimed scenes from Racine and Molière. In the meantime, the favourite's pretty fingers would be busied with thread-picking. "You must know that thread-picking is now most fashionable," wrote Madame Du Deffand to Walpole. "The presents one makes are all of gold thread twisted into every kind of shape: hats, wigs, fruit, mouse-traps, dogs, cats, birds. It is all the rage now, and gives plenty of scope for displaying ostentation and magnificence, since it deprives of all value what once cost us so dear."

Madame Du Barry soon recovered, but the King's health was a cause for anxiety throughout the winter. As a rule illness drove him to seek the consolations of religion, and the question was discussed whether he intended to sacrifice his mistress so that he might go to confession and receive the sacraments. He had already done such a thing once before, at Metz, when he dismissed the Duchess de Châteauroux, and Madame de Pompadour had often feared similar treatment. Only marriage could reconcile the King's weakness with his orthodoxy. The favourite was quite prepared to

play the part of a Maintenon, and Louis XV., whatever he may have said to the contrary, would then have followed in the footsteps of Louis XIV. The difficulty lay rather in obtaining the Pope's consent to the separation of Guillaume Du Barry and his wife.

Madame Louise, the Carmelite, took up the matter, for nothing had grieved her more than her father's latest amour, and she hoped that by legalising the union he would be restored to the arms of the Church. Others were found to support the proposal, especially Messieurs d'Aiguillon and de Maupeou. The Minister and the Chancellor had for some time scarcely been in agreement; the Duke, as the recognised *protégé* of her ladyship, seemed the stronger; the Chancellor, on the other hand, was upheld by the clerical party, and still showed a brave front to the world. But in spite of their conflicting ambitions, both men bent their wits to the task of annulling the marriage of the Countess. The report of the impending petition to the Pope reached Vienna, and Mercy was interrogated at Maria Theresa's command. "The King and the Duke d'Aiguillon are said to have frequent interviews with Madame Louise, the Carmelite, who is understood to be working strenuously for the consent of the Pope to the dissolution of Madame Du Barry's marriage, that the latter may be in a position to marry the King. The success of the negotiations is a matter of indifference to Her Majesty. She even knows such an event to be the only means of setting the King's conscience at rest. She wishes to know, however, if there is any foundation for the rumour."

The Ambassador replied to the Empress: "The Chancellor, with the help of the Archbishop of Paris, has succeeded in embroiling Madame Louise in intrigues of whose object she has no suspicion." But the negotiations were long-drawn and difficult, and in view of the rigorous laws of the Church, had no serious prospect of succeeding. The Abbé Terray was pleased to prolong them; "he believed no more than others in the possibility of arriving at the desired end, but he could at least inspire the favourite with false hopes

for some months," which was all the cunning courtier desired.¹ The question was soon discussed on wider grounds, and a famous memorandum, by the Duke d'Aiguillon's lawyer, Linguet, set a current of public opinion in favour of a divorce law, which was destined to be established twenty years later by the Revolution.²

The proposed marriage did not fail to give rise to malevolent rumours that resort had been had to prompt and efficacious methods of getting rid of the favourite's husband. He was said to be dying of a languishing disease, and base insinuations were made as to its cause. All these calumnies were refuted by the appearance of the "big, fat" Count Guillaume in Paris. He took a house and gave several entertainments, which were much talked about. His wife provided part of the means for defraying his extravagant expenses, but for some time she had complained of his excessive demands. Guillaume only met her refusals with insults and threats. Madame Du Barry and her husband had from the first enjoyed complete independence of property, and now she demanded separation of person and domicile. She won her desire on April 2, 1772, by sentence of the Châtelet, which was later confirmed by a decree of the Parliament. Heavy compensation was granted to the Count, who acquiesced in the decision of the law courts without making further difficulties.

The favourite had at this time recourse to the law in another matter that was as close to her heart as her own affair. A nephew of Billard-Dumouceaux, the naval contractor who had brought Anne Bécu and her little daughter to Paris, had recently been imprisoned for a bankruptcy involving the sum of five million livres. His case was serious and might bring him to the galleys. But he had a powerful protector, who tried by all possible means to obtain a full

¹ He was soon to undertake "imperceptibly to destroy her chimerical hopes of playing the part of a Maintenon or of being Queen of France." (*Mémoires de l'Abbé Terray*, Vol. i., p. 157.)

² The fictitious memorandum is addressed to the Pope, and attempts to reduce indissolubility of marriage to a matter of discipline, which might be modified by the Church.

pardon for him ; all she succeeded in doing, however, was to reduce his sentence. She besought Maupeou in vain ; for the first time he avoided carrying out her wishes. He gave Louis XV. to understand that Madame Du Barry's goodness of heart was in this case opposed to the principles of justice ; the forger was not worthy of a clemency which would stir up the feelings of the people. The Chancellor's words were heeded. Madame Du Deffand wrote of the culprit : " He stood in the pillory at La Grève for two hours under the inscription : *Fraudulent bankrupt, unfaithful steward.* He wore silk stockings and a black suit ; his hair was well dressed and powdered ; he wanted to embrace the executioner who fetched him from prison, called him brother, thanked him for opening the gates of heaven, praised God for the disgrace, and recited psalms all the time he was in the pillory."

That day, too, the young Countess had to be as gay as usual and appear unmoved, showing nothing of her grief ; but on the following day she went to her mother to weep and lament. She could come whenever she chose to the Convent of Sainte-Elisabeth, where Madame Rançon de Montrabé lived. The community was in the exceptional position of being directly responsible to Rome, and Rome had authorised these visits at the special request of Louis XV. to the Mother Superior. Every fortnight the beautiful lady of the Court was made very welcome, as may be imagined ; the Abbess even sent her niece, " who sang very well, to amuse the Countess during dinner." ¹

Though Maupeou dared directly to thwart the wishes of the favourite, he must not be supposed to have done so from excessively honest motives. He feared that to yield to her desire would rouse public opinion against him once more. People were becoming accustomed to the new Parliament, but their hatred of the Chancellor was by no means

¹ Madame Rançon's niece, Betzy, nicknamed Pierrot for her mischievousness, was at that time living with her aunt at the convent, and evil tongues spread the report that she was the favourite's daughter. Drouais had just painted her picture on one of the frieze panels over a door at Louveciennes.

diminished. " Assertions are made," so wrote the gazetteers, " based on his constant disputes with Madame Du Barry and the other ministers of the House of Bourbon, so that everywhere hopes are reviving wonderfully, and the following song has been written as a first instalment of what he may expect :

Par ma foi, René de Maupeou,
 Vous devriez bien être saoul,
 Lon lan la derirette,
 De tous les pamphlets d'aujourd'hui,
 Lon lan la deriri.
 Votre crédit baisse, dit-on,
 Chacun vous tire au court bâton, Lon. : .
 L'abbé Terray, le d'Aiguillon,
 Méditent quelque trahison, Lon. . .
 Mais votre plus affreux malheur
 C'est de n'être plus en faveur,
 Lon lan la derirette,
 Avec Mesdames Du Barry,
 Lon lan la deriri."

Libels rained on Maupeou from every side, each one more defamatory than its predecessor. But Voltaire continued to defend him in verse and prose and praised his hero, who had saved the Crown and rescued it from " the labyrinth of laws," an exploit worthy to be sung by Homer.

The Choiseuls with malicious irony made a weathercock of gold thread as a symbol of the great man's sentiments ; but the philosopher was not so changeable as they thought, and his eulogies were sincere, particularly on this occasion. To him Maupeou's intelligent reforms had the one desirable result of overthrowing the power of the magistrates whose abuse had filled him with so much indignation. Certain prudent spirits drew a lesson from the Chancellor's energetic measures ; the ease with which an ancient institution had been broken down inspired another representative of authority, the Abbé Terray, to deal no less a blow at the administration by an attack on privilege, that had ever been the enemy of the Treasury. The Minister of Finance had come to the end of his resources, and in consequence he suspended the payment of orders on certain funds, diminished life annuities and delayed the payment of the *vingtième*, and

though he may have increased the duties on bread, salt and certain other commodities, he also introduced a tax on newly created nobles. The Princes of the Blood had to sell their horses and limit their households. A furious outcry was raised, and thus began the struggle between the Court and the town of Paris.

Madame Du Barry alone had nothing to fear from these attacks on wealth. The replenished Royal Treasury was open to satisfy her every whim. Terray was asserted to be "so obsequious and devoted in carrying out her wishes that he treated her drafts on the Exchequer as if they were the King's. . . ." Rœtters de la Tour, goldsmith to the King, had at this time just completed for her a hammered service with a design of roses and myrtle. But she desired, above all, the luxury of owning a toilet service entirely of gold. Crowds went to the artist to admire the first article he completed, a mirror surmounted by two Cupids holding a coronet. Nor did they come only to admire; they also made malicious calculations of its cost, and Rœtters had finally to give up the work "on account of the scandal."¹

At Versailles trouble was brewing among the favourite's circle of friends: "They live like cat and dog" said Madame Du Deffand. The Duchess de Mazarin, a beautiful woman, whom tiny Madame de Choiseul asserted to weigh "between three and four hundred," had deserted the party of "dis-senters" for the Barriens, but the jealous Princess de Montmorency declared that she would withdraw if the lady were really permitted to join them. On April 3, the favourite brought the newcomer to Choisy, where they spent two days with His Majesty; the company included some privileged noblemen, Madame de Mirepoix and Madame de l'Hôpital. During their visit the celebrated Audinot, manager of one

¹ "To Rœtters de la Tour, as an indemnity for an incomplete toilet service . . . 1,800 livres." The interesting bills of the Rœtters, father and son, for the articles ordered of them by Madame Du Barry since 1769 have been preserved among her accounts in the *Bibliothèque nationale*. The perfection of their work may be judged from the wealth of detail they give; the knob of her running footman's cane cost 546 livres, 9 sols.

of the amusements at the fair of Saint-Germain, appeared for the first time before the Court. He brought a troupe of children trained to act some rather daring plays, which were the rage in Paris. The first was a comedy by Nogaret, *Il n'y a plus d'enfants*, and they finished with a pantomime-ballet of *Puss-in-Boots*. The entertainment was devised by the Countess, and scandalised the public ;¹ she herself enjoyed it very much, and even the King was seen to " smile occasionally."

On their return the Countess took advantage of her sovereign's amiable frame of mind to make him accept the services of her nephew Adolphe as his chief Equerry. " The Viscount Du Barry will get the post of Chief Equerry to the King," wrote Madame Du Deffand. " He is supposed to have had the commission for a fortnight. De Coigny and de Polignac, who had hoped for the appointment, will instead be given the posts of First Lord-in-Waiting and Chief Equerry, respectively, to the Count d'Artois ; Monsieur de Beauvau will also receive some compensation." Whatever the merits of the young man, it was a triumph for the Du Barry household.

Nor were the great lords and ladies who sought the aid of the favourite ever turned away ; she rendered innumerable services, and was continually being asked to exert her influence over the King in all kinds of difficulties. To her inexhaustible courtesy, *belles-lettres* owed many a favour. The Academy had, on May 7, elected the Abbé Delille and Suard from among nineteen candidates to the vacancies created by the deaths of Bignon and Duclos. Two days later, " when the Academy was on the point of breaking up, a letter from the Duke de La Vrillière arrived, announcing not only that the King declined to confirm the two elections of Thursday, but also that he disallowed them altogether, as, contrary to the statutes, they had been made at a single sitting. Some say the letter added that he disapproved of the persons elected" The fact was

¹ Yet young girls were taken to these plays. Cf. Lucie Achard, *Rosalie de Constant*, p. 44.

that the Abbé Delille and Suard were intimate with the Encyclopædists, to whom His Majesty strongly objected. The election had to be repeated, and great excitement prevailed among the immortals. On the same evening the Prince de Beauvau, who upheld the claims of Suard, wrote to the Abbé Arnaud: "I have come to the conclusion that your friendship with Madame Du Barry makes you the most suitable person to speak to her. You must do so to-morrow, as early as possible, because the King is leaving at about half-past eleven o'clock for Saint-Hubert, and no time must be lost in obtaining a favourable reply, if it can be done, before the Academy assembles. . . ." ¹

The King refused to listen, and in vain Monsieur de Beauvau ventured to demonstrate to His Majesty the wrong done to the liberties of the Academy by this exclusion. "Fearing to witness the dissolution of their society," the Academicians arranged for the new elections to take place on the following Saturday. As soon as the sitting began, they attacked Richelieu, who presided as Director. "He was told that he might have informed the Academy of His Majesty's wishes." They were given the bantering reply: "I, Messieurs? The King speaks to me; I do not speak to the King. I cannot question His Majesty as to his preferences. Ask the Sieur Nestier, who has supplied something like twenty thousand horses to the King. We have yet to find the man who has pleased him more." The peace-loving favourite alone promised to take up the cause of the ill-used candidates. Confidence was restored, for she had already been the means of giving Marmontel his appointment as Royal Historiographer, and had brought the King to approve of D'Alembert as permanent secretary to the Academy. Ten months later the King assured the society, through the Duke de Nivernais, that he no longer opposed the election of Suard and the Abbé Delille.

The philosophers could thus count on the occasional

¹ Madame Du Deffand speaks of the part played by Monsieur de Beauvau, in ignorance of Madame Du Barry's intervention. The Abbé Arnaud, an old friend of the Countess, had been elected to the Academy in 1771.

patronage of the favourite, who, indeed, liked them little enough, and they needed it all the more that they had just lost the support at Court of another great lady. The dowager Duchess d'Aiguillon died suddenly in June, on leaving her bath. "She was a talented woman," wrote one of the gazetteers, "well-informed, and much attracted by modern philosophy, that is to say, by atheism and materialism." But Madame Du Deffand compared the fat Duchess "to a statue that, meant for the vaulted arch of a church, seemed monstrous when seen in the porch." Madame Du Barry wept the loss of her friend, whom she had loved because of the gratitude she had shown for the services the Countess rendered her son. The coffin was carried to the Sorbonne and placed in the tomb of the Richelieus. Undoubtedly the "two urns of a beautiful blue," which the favourite ordered from Sèvres, were intended for the grave of the Duchess.

While still under the impressive influence of her friend's death, Madame Du Barry determined to make a Christian of Zamore, the Indian slave whom she indulged so fondly, and whom she would thus also set free. She herself was his godmother, and she made a Prince of the Blood stand godfather, the Count de la Marche, son of the Prince de Conti. The catechumen wore at his baptism a ravishing hussar uniform, described by the tailor Carlier in his accounts as follows:—"A white silver-laced costume: coat, breeches and buskins of paduasoy: buttons, girdle and sword of silver, plumed cap with a tuft of jasmine." In the register of baptisms in the parish of Notre-Dame we may read:

In the year seventeen hundred and seventy-two, on July 4, Louis-Benoist Zamore, negro servant of Madame la Comtesse Du Barry, about ten years of age, was baptised by the undersigned. . . . The godfather was the Most High and Mighty Prince, Monseigneur Louis-François-Joseph de Bourbon, Comte de la Marche, represented by Dominique-Bénigne Bellot his doorkeeper; The godmother, High and Mighty Dame-Bénédicte de Vaubergny (*sic*), Comtesse Du Barry, represented by Félicité Cuignet, her chief waiting-woman.

The following month witnessed the tragic development of Polish affairs, which were of such deep interest to France. The name of Madame Du Barry has been mixed up in them, though without foundation. She did no more than follow the course of events with concern ; once only she interceded with Louis XV. on behalf of the Confederation of Bar, who had been placed at the mercy of three ambitious sovereigns by the unfortunate, but inevitable, withdrawal of French support.

When d'Aiguillon rose to power he knew nothing of the inner meaning of the European situation, or of the proposals for partition upon which Frederick had already resolved. On learning of the danger that the traditional allies of France ran in the East, he continued Choiseul's indecisive policy, and negotiated with the Porte for help for Poland. But the King, with a fuller knowledge of the trend of affairs, knew that it was too late for prudent interference in the iniquitous drama being played on the Polish stage. Count Wielhorski, the envoy of the Confederates, and an energetic and sensible man, was then in Paris working for the interests of his country.¹ Frederick's letters to the Count de Solms show that he feared this adversary, and required minute accounts of his proceedings. He wrote on May 17, 1772, that : " After receiving the news brought by a courier that Austrian troops, to the number of 40,000 men, were in Poland marching on Cracow, whilst the Russians were advancing from the opposite side with a force of 20,000 men, Count Wielhorski immediately left for Versailles in order to acquaint the Duke d'Aiguillon. The latter listened to him with the impatience of one already better informed. But when Count Wielhorski asked him whether France would desert them in their extremity and allow Poland to be divided among the Powers, the Duke answered : ' How can it be helped ? Your weakness is great and our efforts would be useless. This state of affairs is the result of your

¹ There is an interesting essay in French on the constitution of Poland, published in London in 1775 by " the Count de Wielhorski, Steward of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania."

internal dissensions and the evil intrigues of my predecessor.' The Count went his way lamenting."

This was the only occasion on which Madame Du Barry played an active part, and then only in the sphere of pity. On leaving the Minister, Wielhorski went to the favourite to implore her to plead his cause with Louis XV. He gave her an account of the constitution of his country and of the Confederations which, in reality the defenders of liberty, were misrepresented as forms of anarchy; he told her of the heroism of his countrymen, and exposed to her the brutality of the Russians, the cynicism of the Prussians and the hypocrisy of the Austrians. She listened with interest, "visibly moved," and exhorted him to have courage. The same day she probably spoke to the King. But the waging of war would require both money and the support of London, and the Treasury was drained, while England had little desire to be involved in the conflict. Yet the favourite, with her childish incapacity for realising all this, imagined that such a sinister development of affairs would follow.

In the meanwhile d'Aiguillon sent assistance and won the King's consent to a naval demonstration. Maria Theresa thereupon wrote to Mercy the following instructions, indicating her anxiety at Madame Du Barry's possible intentions and actions:

I have informed my daughter that I have charged you with an important mission, which is near to my heart both as a sovereign and a mother. It is this. Our unfortunate situation, as much with respect to Poland as to the Prussians and the Russians, with whom we are forced to keep on good terms in order to avoid a greater evil, can assuredly change nothing of our alliance with France and Spain that is the natural outcome of our united interests and houses. Having laid down which, I do not deny that France has some cause for complaint at the way matters have been managed. That it could not be prevented was due to no lack of goodwill; but, having to deal according to plans laid down some time ago with a much stronger party, to whose activities the absolute inefficiency of the Porte gave free play,

we could not, without risking our own existence, refuse the offers made us at the end of February on the express condition of communicating them to no one. . . . We are assured that England and the King of Prussia want to win over the Barry, but you should know better than I whether this is so. . . . The King is constant in friendship, and I dare appeal to his heart ; but he is weak, and his surroundings do not allow him sufficient time to reflect and follow the promptings of his own good feeling. You understand how important it is to the preservation of the Alliance that everything should be done at this critical time to prevent permanent separation. I shall never desert the system adopted, and I have given convincing proofs of my sentiments. But should France have dealings with Prussia, who would certainly deceive her, I must inform you that such would be the only case in which I could not help altering at once ; I should do so with very great regret, but it would be inevitable. Every possible means must be taken to prevent these evils and troubles to the monarchy and the family, and only my daughter, the Dauphine, with the help of your counsels and knowledge of the place, can render such a service to her family and her country. Above all, she must win the favour of the King by her attentions and tenderness ; she should seek to divine his wishes, should offend him in nothing, and must treat the favourite well. I demand of her no close intercourse, much less any meanness, only the attentions she owes for the sake of her grandfather and master, for the sake of the good which may result to us and the two Courts ; perhaps the Alliance depends on her actions.

Maria Theresa was mistaken in her fears ; Louis XV. had no intention of separating from his old friend. The Alliance had been his own well-thought-out work, and he would not be the first to break it. The country was at last recovering from the effects of the Seven Years' War and, in spite of public agitation, many of the provinces were thriving, the peasants were happier, commerce was developing, all the arts were flourishing, and Europe still recognised the hegemony of France. The monarch was certainly not going to endanger the prosperity of his country for a chivalrous but

useless enterprise ; he hardened himself with prudent egoism.

Mercy, for his part, often went to see the Countess and cultivated her goodwill towards the Austrian party ; " I have commenced to instruct her on the great truths of History," he pompously wrote to the Empress ; " she listens, and understands what I say. I try to guide her by her own personal interests, and since Madame la Dauphine has begun to give some small support to my proceedings, I hope that affairs here will remain on the footing which the service of Your Majesty requires."

As Mercy said, the young Princess had in fact seconded Maria Theresa's views ; from the moment she felt herself to be the frail link uniting the two sovereign houses, she studied how to serve the cause of the Alliance. She now supported the favourite even against Mesdames. At Compiègne she sent the Dauphin to the supper-parties at the " Petit Château," over which the mistress presided, and when, one Sunday morning, Mesdames Du Barry and d'Aiguillon came to pay their court to her, she received them with smiles, the charming smiles with which she thought to make amends for the desertion of Poland.¹ She was no doubt influenced by Mercy, who had redoubled his " pressing representations." He relates how " after the Royal Mass, the favourite arrived with the Duchess d'Aiguillon. Madame la Dauphine at first spoke to the latter, and then, turning towards the favourite, she made some remarks on the weather and the chase in such a way that, without directly addressing the Countess Du Barry, the latter could yet imagine that the remarks were made as much to her as to the Duchess d'Aiguillon. No more was needed to satisfy the favourite. The King was informed of what had passed, and showed his pleasure to Madame la Dauphine by several little attentions at dinner

¹ Mercy adds that on the departure of the two ladies, the Princess made some very well-judged reflections on the subject of the attitude to be taken up towards the favourite, which were approved by the Dauphin, who was present, as also the Count and Countess de Provence.

the same evening." The political interest of this day was not lost on the Ambassadors, of whom more than one thought right to give an account of its incidents in his despatches. "Matters must have been serious," wrote one of them, "that Madame la Dauphine should have consented to break with her aunts, work at overcoming the Dauphin's aversion for Madame Du Barry and herself grant the latter that grain of recognition which she had hitherto always denied her."

The Court left Compiègne on August 27; on her return to Versailles the Countess was subjected to a violently libellous attack. The Lieutenant-general of police displayed great zeal in suppressing the sale of the book, which was printed in England, but some copies were, none the less, put in circulation. Its title ran: *The Authentic Memoirs of the Countess Du Barré (sic), Mistress of Louis XV., King of France. Extracts from a manuscript in the possession of Madame la Duchesse de Villeroy, by the Chevalier Fr. N. Translated from the English.*

The Duchess de Villeroy was most certainly not concerned in its coarse and verbose anecdotes, of which even the *Mémoires secrets* speak with disgust, unable to find "a single one which may be held to approach the truth." The publication was less a pamphlet than a filthy novel to which a well-known name had been appended. The initials of the title were reluctantly admitted to disclose the authorship of François Nogaret, the "French Aristænetus, a writer of some talent whose style was not unattractive. He was imprisoned in the Bastille in 1765 for the obscene publication of the *Capucinades*, and he now revenged himself cruelly on the King's mistress.

She was saddened by this piece of malice, but soon found consolation in the arrival of the happiest of news from Sweden. On August 19, Gustavus III. freed himself from his nobility by a Royal Revolution accomplished in the space of a few hours. When on September 17 the Baron de Lieven came to Versailles, with a white handkerchief on his arm, to announce the victory, the Countess was trans-

ported with joy. She wanted at once to send the young Prince her bust, and also her portrait by Greuze. The Count de Creutz wrote to his sovereign of her desire, begging him to thank the favourite, but at the same time to remember public opinion, for early changes at Court were to be expected. Gustavus followed the advice of his Ambassador, and wrote thus :

Madame la Comtesse Du Barry,—The interest you take in my success makes it all the more agreeable to me. The Baron de Lieven has faithfully reported to me all the kindness you have shown him, and I am sincerely grateful to you. I confidently rely on the sentiments you have always expressed for me, and I have no doubt that I shall frequently have occasion to speak of the gratitude with which I am, very truly yours . . .

The young King ought, indeed, to be full of gratitude to the favourite whose goodwill continued to support his vigorous action against the hostility of foreign Courts. By the success of her *protégé* France won a striking revenge for the spoliation of Poland. The Prussians and the Russians did not conceal their dissatisfaction ; Frederick predicted every kind of misfortune to his nephew for his *coup d'état*, and Catherine, assuming an attitude of detachment, showed no less vexation in a letter to Voltaire. She laughed at a nation that had “ lost in less than a quarter-of-an-hour its constitution and its liberty,” and declared its ruler to be “ as despotic as the King of France.”

The triumph, which Gustavus III. owed in part to the Cabinet of Versailles, heightened the prestige of the Duke d'Aiguillon. The Printing Department of the Foreign Office issued a leaflet on “ The form of government in Sweden ratified by the King and the Estates of the Realm at Stockholm on August 21, 1772, together with the speeches delivered on the occasion of its closure.” Though the extracts were scattered in various gazettes, the Minister had them carefully collected, and distributed them in the above form. Voltaire made use of the revolution in the North to fill his last tragedy, *Les Lois de Minos*, with allu-



VOLTAIRE

Engraved by Langlois from the painting by De Latour

sions. Certain eulogies at first addressed to the Chancellor Maupeou were now applied to "The young and worthy heir of the great name of Gustavus."

At the request of the author, Lekain recited *Les Lois de Minos* before Madame Du Deffand and a gathering of her friends. The illustrious writer would gladly have had the same happen at the favourite's, but the Court persisted more than ever in its golden dreams. Voltaire said on this subject to "his guardian angel," d'Argental: "The Marshal has written to me that he will have him [Lekain] imprisoned if he is not in Paris by the 4th [October]. . . . He will bring you Minos' code, which I gave him when he left Ferney. I am sorry that Madame Du Barry has not heard the recital, for I hear she has much natural taste and wit. You ought to know that better than I, you who must needs go to Court." Since it concerned Gustavus, the Countess was eager to read the "Cretan tragedy," much to Voltaire's gratification.

On September 22 Louis XV. and the favourite went to Neuilly to open the new bridge, which was a magnificent piece of architecture. Monsieur de Trudaine, superintendent of finance, prepared a great reception for them. Everyone thronged to the fête, whose picturesque and animated scene has been preserved in a sketch by Hubert Robert. Versailles and Paris both joined in the rejoicings, which were really in honour of the mistress, and roused dissatisfaction among the Royal Family, who had been carefully excluded.

But the capital was not the only place to court her. In Bordeaux a ship was built and launched in the month of October, bearing the name of *Comtesse Du Barry*. There is a drawing signed by the painter Delorge, in a frame surmounted by the arms of the favourite, now in the Versailles Museum. Inscribed on it are the following lines:

Vaisseau tu peux sans crainte aller braver l'orage,
Ton nom est Du Barry, tu portes son image.
De la beauté Neptune aime à porter les fers ;
Amphitrite moins belle a regné sur les mers.

The frigate sails on a calm sea, and Minerva, appearing in a cloud, seems anxious to protect her ; Fame is by her side ; above, spirits symbolising the arts, support her ladyship's escutcheon, and a floating pennant bears the famous word *Boutez*. Nothing could be more flattering than such an allegory, and one may easily understand why the Countess always kept the picture among her most precious possessions, long after her name had ceased to be wafted over the seas.

The time for the visit to Fontainebleau was approaching, and the Countess was much busied with milliners and dressmakers, with the choosing of gala frocks and full dress robes. Assisted by Papillon de La Ferté she had selected the repertory of plays for the season. " I was yesterday at Choisy," wrote the latter on October 4. " Madame Du Barry asked me to add *Alphée et Aréthuse* to the Fontainebleau repertory, for the Demoiselle Arnould. Thinking the list finally determined, I left her. But when I came to the King, His Majesty asked me if I had not come to Choisy to effect some alterations in the repertory. I assented. ' Well, as long as you stay you will not be rid of the business,' he did me the honour to say. And, indeed, just as I was leaving, Madame Du Barry sent to tell me that on further reflection she did not want the *Cinquantaine*. I pleaded in vain with the Duke d'Aiguillon on behalf of Monsieur de La Borde, First Valet of the Bedchamber, who had written the play. She persisted in her decision, saying that however much she liked Monsieur de La Borde, she refused to be bored, or to bore others." ¹

This autumn at Fontainebleau opened most favourably. Madame Du Barry was able to discard all thought of politics for the amusements she preferred, and to leave d'Aiguillon and Maupeou " at daggers drawn," as his blind correspondent wrote to Walpole. She found that her salon looking

¹ Monsieur de La Borde was angry, and accused La Ferté in some rather heated letters of having made Madame Du Barry dislike his play. The good Master of the Ceremonies defended himself ; " I showed," he said, " the various letters to Madame Du Barry, who will probably have him written to on the subject."

out on the Cour de Diane had been enlarged, and ever greater numbers of the faithful crowded there to pay their homage. "Her ladyship is still triumphant," said Madame Du Deffand. "Several ladies have offered themselves who wish to increase her court. They are tried, and most of them are rejected. The Duchess de Mazarin is half-admitted, or in other words, she is rather like the understudy of an actress. The Princess de Kinski has been rejected, and the Princess de Montmorency has withdrawn since Madame de Mazarin was received."

As soon as she was settled, Madame Du Barry went, with the Duchess d'Aiguillon, to pay her respects to the Dauphine, having previously asked Mercy "to arrange that she should be as well received as possible." The Princess was not favourably inclined, and would have preferred to shut the door unceremoniously in her face. But as ever, she was compelled to submit to the ordeal in the interests of her mother. This time she sought aid from Heaven, and during Mass she prayed: "Oh, Lord, if it be Thy will that I speak, make me speak: I shall do even as Thy goodness may inspire me." And Heaven inspired her with the simple remark, which was, moreover, addressed to Madame d'Aiguillon: "The weather is bad to-day; one will not be able to go out." It was not much, and once more Monsieur de Kaunitz declared the Archduchess to be "bad at following a lead."

The day after the visit the Countess accepted an invitation to supper with the Duke de La Vrillière. Among the others invited were the Duchess de Cossé, Mistress of the Robes to the Dauphine. The proud Duchess refused, for she hated the favourite, whom she thought Monsieur de Cossé admired too much. To shield his wife the latter cleverly put the blame on the Dauphine, but Mercy assured Madame Du Barry that Marie Antoinette had nothing to do with the whims of her Mistress of the Robes, and she willingly believed him. She seemed pleased with Mercy's attentions, and she always admitted him to her evening receptions, which took place when Louis XV. dined with his family.

The Ambassador boasted of these distinctions in the peevish tone that suited the circumstances. "The woman only receives foreign Ministers on Sunday afternoons; *I am the only one to have access to her daily, even when the King is present. . . .*" He profited by this privilege to advance the interests of his Queen. He confided to the favourite how much the French Ambassador at Vienna, Cardinal Louis de Rohan, displeased Maria Theresa, if not the fair Austrians. He insinuated in many ways how little suited such a superficial man was to his post, and suggested his recall. Madame Du Barry replied without compromising herself, "that the Duke d'Aiguillon and she thought little of the talents of Prince Louis, whom they knew to be very light-minded; but that his recall would seem like a disgrace, which would rouse the antagonism of the Prince de Soubise and the Princess de Marsan, whom they were trying to separate from the Chancellor's party, and therefore did not wish to offend; and finally, that the Prince de Rohan's embassy would only be of short duration. . . .," no bad answer for a novice at diplomacy.

The last performance of the year at Fontainebleau was *Tom Jones*, followed by a ballet in which the younger Vestris danced for the first time. "The Sieur Larrivée and his wife sang the interludes. Everyone agreed that in all Europe it would be difficult to bring together so large a number of such distinguished talents." Thus Monsieur de La Ferté. It would probably have been just as difficult to find greater splendour and elegance than that displayed by the company of great ladies who were present at the Royal performance. Among them the favourite, in a gown of "mauve crêpon" with gold-bespangled paniers, shone resplendent, in her diadem of amethysts and heavy necklets, which made her seem more like a fragile and magnificent idol than a human being.

On November 17 the Court returned to Versailles. The gilded rooms of the favourite were exceedingly pleasant in winter. Elsewhere in the vast chambers of the Château one froze, but there it was always warm and fragrant.

They were, however, too small for the entertainments she intended to give, and she bought a house in Versailles in the Avenue de Paris. The celebrated René Binet, First Valet-de-chambre to the Dauphin, and a cousin of Madame de Pompadour, had built it in 1751.¹ It was modest in size, but surrounded by extensive gardens. Madame Du Barry meant to have a large hôtel built on the grounds, where she could move all her household, and she had asked the architect Ledoux for plans.

The Countess was busy with these schemes when an incident occurred which, though expected, caused some sensation both at Court and in Paris. The Princes of the Blood who had taken the part of the exiled Parliament capitulated. Condé had sought every possible means of returning to favour since his enforced breach with the King. His opportunity came on the occasion of his asking for the Knighthood of the Holy Ghost for his son. He wrote a very humble letter to the King, and the Count de la Marche, the Prince de Soubise and Monsieur de Maupeou undertook the negotiations. The sovereign was indifferent, and "allowed him to come the following day," as the Dauphine wrote to her mother. "He and his son paid their visit to us all." Nor did the Prince forget to call on the favourite, and although he had neglected her advice in the matter she received him very kindly. But the ballads took up a different attitude :

Pour faire une fausse démarche
Condé se montre le premier,
Crainte que son cousin La Marche
Des hommes ne soit le dernier.

"The Father and the Son have gone to look for the Holy Ghost," said one ; "He went to prove his nobility," said another.

Through the good offices of Madame Du Barry, the Duke d'Orléans and the Duke de Chartres were reconciled to His

¹ See Chapter V. The sellers were Binet de Boisgiroux and Binet de Marchais, the husband of the witty Madame de Marchais, who as Madame d'Angiviller became, later, the friend of Madame Du Barry.

Majesty. The Duke d'Orléans was anxious to obtain Louis' consent to his marriage with Madame de Montesson, and hoped the favourite would win it for him. The King hesitated long before giving way ; Madame de Montesson was the *bourgeoise* widow of a gentleman who, in his old age, had married the young girl of sixteen. She was an agreeable woman, whose purity of morals was unusual in such an age, and her prolonged resistance to his wishes had greatly quickened the Duke's passion. The Countess succeeded in persuading the King to consent to the marriage, but he refused the bride permission to take the name and title of her husband. No doubt the mistress herself would have accepted a morganatic marriage with the King on even lower terms, but such a thing was no longer to be thought of. Much to the favourite's grief, the legal enactment of her divorce was not effected, a circumstance that increased Louis' uneasiness of conscience.

New Year's Day, 1773, brought a crowd of visitors to Madame Du Barry ; she received them with gracious smiles, conscious that she appeared even more fair in the fascinating dress of gold lace and brocade she had chosen for the occasion. There were Dukes and Duchesses, great lords and ladies, all beautifully dressed ; Ministers, Ambassadors and Royal officers, and the eager throng of friends and dependants of the Countess.

The King had already come at daybreak by the little staircase to wish her the compliments of the season, and the tender gaiety with which she responded may be imagined. But now she threw her silk cloak about her shoulders, put on her hat trimmed with blond-lace and white plumes, and, with her sister-in-law and Mesdames de Maupeou and d'Aiguillon, went in her turn to pay her respects to the Royal Family. His Majesty smiled on the visitors ; the Dauphin received them most kindly and graciously spoke to the favourite, much to her surprise, for, as a rule, he addressed no one. But the reception they were given by the Dauphine was quite different. She did not condescend to notice the presence of the ladies, except by pouting her

pretty, Austrian lips a little more. She seemed to think she had done enough for the Countess by pleading her cause with the Dauphin. As she explained, in reply to Mercy's diplomatic reprimands, she had passed on to him the duty of an outward show of favour, and indeed her useless husband, for once, might do her such a service.

The favourite was not exactly charmed with her reception. D'Aiguillon undertook to tell the Austrian Ambassador that "The Dauphine seemed intentionally to set the King at defiance from the way she treated the people he most favoured." Mercy retorted that the King allowed himself to neglect "his own children every day," making use of the case of Mesdames to excuse his Archduchess. But Maria Theresa, fearing the consequences of her daughter's caprice, wrote to her at once: "I am not satisfied with your behaviour on New Year's Day. . . . Amends must be made at the first opportunity; the month of February will serve the purpose as well as that of January. I do not think it too much to ask that you should speak to the favourite without affectation four or five times a year, and you cannot abash Monsieur d'Aiguillon better than by not letting him get the advantage of you on this point." All the importance attached to "the woman" only increased the vexation of the Dauphine. "The ill will of the favourite," Mercy said again, "might have most dangerous consequences, which should at all costs be avoided, on affairs of the greatest importance." The fact was that the Polish Partition question was still unsettled, and Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who played a thankless part in the affair, could not help owing Maria Theresa a grudge.

At this time the attention of the favourite was distracted from politics by all the Carnival festivities, which reached their highest point of splendour at Versailles. Suppers, balls and plays followed each other in rapid succession. Mademoiselle Raucourt, who had recently enjoyed a success at the Theatre Français, made her début before the Court, and all agreed she was the most accomplished actress they had seen. She was only sixteen years and a half, "per-

fectly made, with the most beautiful, noble, theatrical face, a voice of the most ravishing quality, and a prodigious intellect," according to the raptures of the *Mémoires secrets*. For six months "this tiger of virtue" resisted the most attractive proposals, but then what amends she won! She played "Dido" before the King, who had fifty louis sent to her, and presented "the Queen of Carthage" to the Dauphine. The favourite shared the general enthusiasm. "The fair Countess asked her which she liked best, three dresses for her own use or a theatrical costume. The actress replied that, since the Countess allowed her to choose, she would prefer the theatrical costume, which would give pleasure to the public as well."¹ The favourite sent to the young artist a magnificent costume of "a silver material striped with gold, embroidered in green, and covered with spangles and knots of rubies, very costly"; the price was, in fact, 6,600 livres. Other ladies of the Court followed her example; the Princess de Beauvau, the Duchess de Villeroy and the Princess de Guéménée received the popular actress as the Countess had done, and presented her with "superb costumes."² Later she wore the splendid garments in the performances given under the auspices of the Duke d'Aiguillon and Madame Du Barry in turn.

First of all, the young Viscount invited his pretty aunt to an evening reception in Mademoiselle Chon's rooms. Then there was an entertainment at the Duke's in his hôtel at Versailles. None of the diversions devised by the exquisite taste of the age were lacking; ballet, supper-party and masked ball, all displayed a luxury and elegance only known to the latter part of the 18th century. The interludes were dedicated to the favourite, who was present

¹ The writer says later that "Madame Du Barry took sufficient interest in the new actress to exhort her to be prudent." Mademoiselle Raucourt's portrait, drawn by Freudeberg and engraved by Lingée, bears a dedication to Madame Du Barry and her arms.

² Grimm could not find words enough to praise "the wise Raucourt." "To see the fair Queen of Carthage who was so imposing on the stage sitting quietly dressed in ordinary attire, shy and embarrassed, in the corner of some great lady's reception room, was most striking."

with many other ladies, "with all the great people there are." "The black snake" that disturbed the village festival of the play, people chose to consider a personification of Monsieur de Maupeou, for the Chancellor was lampooned just as much at Court as in Paris. The Countess, in her turn, invited the Duke and Duchess d'Aiguillon to her villa in the Avenue de Paris. Fourteen ladies and fifteen noblemen were asked, and Papillon de La Ferté undertook all the arrangements. "Our men," he wrote on February 15, "are hard at work night and day, in spite of the bad weather. The Marshal and Madame Du Barry are exceedingly afraid that it will not be ready by the day after to-morrow. I have reassured them. I was yesterday evening at the Hôtel des Menus, where I saw the rehearsal by members of the Comédies Française and Italienne and of the Opera. . . . The rehearsal lasted until half-past two in the morning, having begun after the supper, which Madame Du Barry had ordered to be served in the green-room."¹ A truly regal entertainment was in preparation.

Two days later, at midnight, numbers of carriages stopped at the villa. Madame Du Barry did the honours, assisted by Mademoiselle Chon; and until daybreak the lights burned in the golden torch-stands that stood amid baskets of flowers. Voisenon and Favart had composed the interludes. A rather affected allegory, *La Reveil des Muses, des Talents et des Arts*, was performed, whose only merit lay in allusions; Love, for instance, said:

" En ces lieux Du Barry s'avance,
Plaisirs, soyez tous ranimés !
Est-il possible, en sa presence,
Que des yeux demeurent fermés ! "

This insipid stuff laid claim to being at once flattering and mythological, but the attraction lay rather in the acting of Madame La Ruette, Mesdemoiselles Raucourt and

¹ *Journal de Papillon de La Ferté*, p. 342. Mercy did not hesitate to assert that the sumptuous preparations for this entertainment "were carried to such an indecent pitch of costliness as to insult the poverty of the people."

Dervieux, with Dauberval and Prévile, in a setting of dreamlike beauty. The ballet, *Endymion*, danced by Vestris, was followed by scenes in which topical verses were sung, among them one by "a seller of barometers," beginning as follows :

Du Barry de ces lieux a chassé la froidure,
Son regard forme le printemps. . . .

Every drawing-room was full of talk of this fête ;¹ for a month it was the subject of correspondence and the theme on which the papers discoursed, both praise and blame being expressed. Some rejoiced that the King had not appeared at all, "either formally or incognito, which mortified the favourite." Only one Ambassador, the Count de Creutz, was invited. Much comment was made on the presence of a newcomer, another defection from Choiseul's party. This was the Countess de Forcalquier, Madame Du Deffand's "Bellissima."² Mademoiselle d'Aumont was there, wearing a magnificent dress of white taffetas, the gift of Madame Du Barry ; her sister, the Duchess de Mazarin "retorted with a pair of slippers embroidered with cara," wrote the malicious Marquise, "saying that the feet at which everyone would worship must be adorned."

The guests at Chanteloup during the Carnival brought

¹ "There has been much talk of the fête given by Madame la Comtesse Du Barry in her villa of the Avenue de Versailles. There were four performances, and about a hundred actors, singers and dancers from the three theatres. All kinds of agreeable surprises were devised to illustrate the greatness of the lady's charm. Among other things they speak of an egg that was found in the middle of one of the rooms. A show was made of fetching the Countess to see the marvel that had so suddenly appeared ; she barely approached when it opened. A fully-armed Cupid sprang out, and people said that a single one of her glances made Love blossom in all hearts. In another interlude Love loosened the bandage from his eyes, thus indicating the monarch's enlightened love for the favourite." *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. xxiv., p. 239.

² Madame de Forcalquier had previously been to Choisy, as Madame Du Deffand had described in a long letter of January 26, In another she said : "La Bellissima . . . accepted an invitation because it was such that no one would dare refuse it. . . . The reason would be valid if she had not added to this compulsory submission an hour's visit which was certainly not so."

detailed accounts of all this magnificence, which did not, however, diminish the gaiety there in the least. It was even too noisy for the little exiled Duchess, according to her big Abbé. "Oh, Lord, what a number of people, what cries and noise and piercing laughs, what bursting of doors, what barking of dogs, what uproarious conversation and wanton tricks, what voices, arms and feet in constant motion. . . ." Good taste was forgotten, but at Versailles it was jealously adhered to. The Countess de Noailles, "Madame Etiquette," Lady of the Bedchamber to the Dauphine, gave two balls for the young Princesses, and their beauty added brilliancy to the scene.

Every dissipation ended with Lent, and life became all masses, benedictions and sermons. The Court preacher, the Abbé de Beauvais, displayed an extreme austerity, and filled his eloquent sermons with severe denunciations.¹ The little Dauphine wrote to her mother: "We have a very good preacher this Lent, who gives us sermons three times a week; he preaches on the morality of the gospels, and tells everyone a number of truths. But I prefer Massillon's *Petit Carême*, because it is more within my reach."

The truths of the divine were not outside the favourite's experience, and though she seemed at ease in her crimson velvet chair, she trembled none the less. For if Louis XV. returned to grace, piety supplanting love in his heart, he would dismiss Madame Du Barry. But the King's affection remained constant, and, as a great favour, the Countess was entrusted with the duty of forming the household of the Count d'Artois, although Madame Adelaide had shown a lively desire to be given the charge.

The Count d'Artois, the only attractive one of the three brothers, married Marie-Thérèse of Savoy, the sister of Madame de Provence. At the same time the marriage of

¹ "Well, Richelieu," said the King to the companion of his follies on leaving the Chapel one day; "the preacher seems to have thrown a good many stones in your garden" (an idiomatic expression for making severe criticisms). "Yes, sire," replied the witty courtier, "and so hard that some of them rebounded into the Park of Versailles."

the good-hearted Madame Clotilde, "fat Madame," as she was nicknamed, to the Prince of Piedmont was announced. These two further bonds uniting the Royal Families of France and Savoy disturbed the Empress. "The party is becoming very strong," she wrote to her daughter; and the little Dauphine promised full obedience in order to restore her august mother's tranquillity.

Madame Du Barry had never been without the support of the world of letters, and in return she bestowed on them her powerful protection. It was a great honour to be allowed to read a manuscript before her. La Harpe, who brought her his tragedy of the *Barmécides*, could not please her, but Delille was more fortunate. "Monsieur de Beauvau," wrote Madame Du Deffand, "has informed me that Monsieur des Cars introduced the Abbé Delille to the Countess. He recited his translation of the fourth book of the *Æneid* before her and all her court, excepting Madame de Mirepoix. The company seemed pleased, which goes far to assure him of a first place in the Academy." Delille was always to be her Ladyship's poet.

Soon after, a letter from Voltaire confirmed the new divinity's titles to wit and beauty :

Madame, Monsieur de la Borde tells me that you have commanded him to kiss me on both cheeks on your behalf.

Quoi ! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie !
 Quel passeport vous daignez m'envoyer !
 Deux ! c'est trop d'un, adorable Egérie :
 Je serais mort de plaisir au premier.

He has shown me your portrait ; do not be angered, Madame, if I have taken the liberty to return the two kisses to it :

Vous ne pouvez empêcher cet hommage,
 Faible tribut de quelconque a des yeux ;
 C'est aux mortels d'adorer votre image ;
 L'original était fait pour les dieux !

I have heard several extracts from Monsieur de La Borde's *Pandore*, and they seem to me very worthy of your patronage. Favour bestowed on the genuine arts is the only thing which can augment the splendour that is yours. . . .

Deign to accept, Madame, the regard of an old solitary whose heart knows wellnigh only the one sentiment of gratitude.

Private correspondence and public papers were full of these charming stanzas, which excited Madame de Choiseul's indignation, were admired by Frederick II., and smiled on by Louis XV.¹ To the favourite they were the crowning act of homage.

She was enjoying one of her rare moments of rest when her pride of power yielded to the sweetness of being admired. Every poet sang her praises. A playwright, Sauvigny, composed some delightful verses in her honour, and, finding he was encouraged, sought her patronage for a large work of ten volumes, entitled *Le Parnasse des Dames*, in which he intended to "make known the genius of womanhood of all nations throughout the ages." The first volume, as soon as it appeared, was subscribed for in great numbers by the courtiers, who thus contributed to the success Madame Du Barry desired for it.²

From Meister, who afterwards came frequently to see her, she received a translation of Gessner's *Nouvelles Idylles*, with a dedication in verse which the *Almanach des Muses* hastened to publish :

Que l'églogue au naïf sourire
Arrête un instant vos regards !
Comme vous belle sans parure,
Elle doit tout aux mains de la nature,
Comme vous elle a quelquefois,
Sous l'air d'une simple bergère,
Charmé les héros et les rois. . . .

Her exasperated adversaries did not fail to add a discordant note to this harmony of praise. They assumed

¹ In her letter of August 18 to Madame Du Deffand the Duchess de Choiseul spoke of Voltaire's note to the favourite : "I see I have spoilt them [the verses] in quoting them to you, for I no longer think them so pretty. Poor Voltaire has debased his pen in his old age !"

² "The lady has subscribed for a prodigious number of copies, and whoever would pay her court must do likewise. . . . It is a very insipid and fulsome rhapsody. . . ." *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. xxiv., p. 256.

that a most virulent quarrel had taken place between the young Countess and her brother-in-law, and Count Jean was supposed to have put the following abusive lines in circulation :

Drôlesse !
 Où prends-tu donc ta fierté ?
 Princesse,
 D'où te vient ta dignité ? . . .
 Baisse ta tête altière
 Du moins devant mes yeux ! . . .
 Permits à qui t'aime, qui t'aime,
 De t'offrir encor des sabots !
 Drôlesse !
 Mon esprit est-il baissé ?
 Princesse !
 Te souvient-il du passé ?

Madame Du Deffand sent the ballad to the Choiseuls, thus returning it, doubtless, to the place of its origin. Nevertheless, the Duchess replied : " I am madly delighted with *drôlesse* and *princesse* ; the effect of the two words together is admirable. It is novel, but most suited to the case."

Certainly the Roué was careful not to attack the Countess, especially at a time when she was looking for a wife for Adolphe Du Barry. It was an arduous undertaking, and the Royal Equerry would decidedly have preferred always to be near his beloved aunt, but the uncertainty of his future had to be guarded against by a good match. Jean Du Barry was full of ambition for his son, and the first whom he thought suitable was Mademoiselle de Saint-André, a daughter of Louis XV. and the little O'Murphy, and a pupil at the convent of La Présentation. Madame de Pompadour had similarly thought to marry her Alexandrine to the young Count de Luc, a son of the King and Madame de Vintimille, but His Majesty disapproved of such arrangements. Mademoiselle de Saint-André was very beautiful and astonishingly like her father. In the convent parlour she saw the pale young man of twenty-four, who wore his uniform of a Colonel of Horse with such perfect distinction. He seemed to her the Prince Charming of her dreams, and she fell in love with him, and it was with genuine grief

that she had to give up the project which had been laid before her.¹ Very soon afterwards she married the Marquis de la Tour de Pin, and the mistress herself was active in the preparations for this wedding too.²

Mademoiselle de Saint-André or another, all were alike to the young man whose heart was filled with one image that nothing could efface. The Prince de Soubise proposed one of his relatives, a pupil in the convent of l'Assomption, who though not wealthy, was of the family of Rohan. Hélène de Tournon agreed to marry the Viscount for the sake of all the advantages she would gain. The favourite made the pair a present of 200,000 livres, of which she was only to pay the interest. Among her magnificent gifts to the bride were beribboned underwear, embroidered garters, hats trimmed with lace and dresses from which she might choose her wedding gown. Sometimes this was coloured, but this one at least was specially designed, and was "of white and silver trimmed with silver lace and flowers, knots and necklets of silver." Her accounts include also, under Adolphe Du Barry's name, workboxes with his coat-of-arms, jewel boxes, fans and a thousand other little feminine trinkets.

The contract was signed on July 18, as announced in the *Gazette de France*. The Roué described himself as "Most high and mighty Seigneur, Monseigneur Jean-Baptiste,

¹ Jean Du Barry was even more loth to give up the project, as is shown by a curious letter which he wrote to his sister-in-law bitterly reproaching her for not having been sufficiently obstinate in the matter: "Mademoiselle de Saint-André . . . in losing the hope she had entertained of becoming your niece, has given up even the desire to please, and refuses every sort of adornment in the seclusion of her convent. If you only reflected, my dear sister, we should soon agree that the very girl who may now spend her life in obscurity, might with your support have eclipsed in importance all the others we have sought; and let us agree still further that she would have been the only one to awaken in the Dauphin's heart a feeling of shame, and prevent him from yielding in the future to his impulses of hatred and jealousy towards all that bear our name." *Revue de Paris*, 1836, Vol. xxxiv., p. 142.

² The marriage took place on December 29, 1773, but the young Marquise died childless the following year.

Comte Du Barry-Cérès, Vidame de Chaalons, Comte de l'Isle-Jourdain, Seigneur de Bellegarde, Bretz, Garbée, Lassère, Seijaundas, Thil, part of Maubec, Gray and other places, Governor of Lévignac, resident in his hôtel, rue Richelieu, parish of Saint-Roch." The Countess could well smile at this array of titles, she knew how ludicrously little they meant, but the high-sounding words looked well on the document which had first been signed by the King and the Dauphin, the Dauphine and all the Royal Family. The order of the signatures in this strangely mixed list of names is worthy of note: "Louis; Louis-Auguste; Marie-Antoinette; Stanislas-Xavier [Count de Provence]; Charles-Philippe [Count d'Artois]; Marie-Adelaide, Victoire-Louise, Sophie-Philippe [Mesdames de France]; Jeanne Gomard Vaubernier, Countess Du Barry; Count Jean Du Barry; Jean-Baptiste (Adolphe), Viscount Du Barry; Françoise Du Barry [Chon]; the Chevalier Du Barry; the Count de Tournon; Souveraine de Trelemont, Contaice (*sic*) de Tournon; Rose-Marie-Hélène de Tournon [the bride]; Sophie de Tournon; Beaujon, etc."¹ On July 19, the day after this pompous performance, the religious ceremony took place in the Chapel of Versailles, and the favourite fastened with her own hand the sword-knot "of green and gold, adorned with gold lace," which she had given the bridegroom.

The radiant Viscountess was presented at Compiègne on Sunday, August 1. She was seventeen, and her beauty recalled that of the Duchess de Châteauroux, a coincidence which allowed the newsmongers to give free play to their fancy and make up the most preposterous stories. The favourite was sponsor to the young bride, and presented her to the King and the Royal Family. Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa on the 14th: "In the afternoon, when the benediction was over, the Countess Du Barry, accompanied by the Duchess de Laval and a Countess de Montmorency, presented her niece to the King, who said not a word to the ladies. They next proceeded to the Dauphine, who received them similarly. There was such a concourse of

¹ *Vatel*, Vol. ii., p. 260.

people come to see the presentation that it was scarcely possible to pass through the antechambers. The Dauphine received the above ladies without the slightest sign of embarrassment. She saluted the favourite, the young bride and their companions, but addressed neither of them. The same happened when they came to Mesdames ; only the Count and Countess de Provence spoke at all to the presented lady and her sponsor."

Nor did Marie Antoinette speak to them in the evening at cards, when etiquette required that the same ladies should be present, and she remained dumb the following day when they returned to pay their court. At least her easy demeanour indicated some goodwill, and she was able to write to the Empress : " My dearest mother, the presentation of young Madame Du Barry went off very well. Just before she came I was told that the King had spoken neither to her nor to her aunt, and I followed his example. Otherwise I can quite assure my dear mamma that I received them most politely. I am sure the King was not displeased, for he has been very kind to us all day."

There was a coldness between Monsieur d'Aiguillon and the favourite and, what was worse, between him and Mademoiselle Chon, his real protector. To win back their regard he tried once more to fulfil the wishes of the Countess, and worked to effect a reconciliation between her and the Royal Family. During the stay at Compiègne he succeeded in bribing the Countess de Narbonne, Mistress of the Robes to Madame Adelaide, " over whom she had the most undisputed sway." But Mademoiselle Du Barry had lost faith in such risky proceedings, and said as much in an ironical tone to Monsieur de Mercy. The favourite said nothing to him, which surprised and displeased him. As if he had a right to her ladyship's confidence, he wrote every time she shunned him and complained to the Empress. He was neglected thus because the Countess was strong enough to do without his advice, and, as at the moment Madame Adelaide appeared disposed to yield to her wishes, she gave all her attention to the Princess.

At the dictation of the Countess de Narbonne the King's eldest daughter wrote to him that, having heard "he was somewhat dissatisfied with the conduct of his children, she had at first intended to beg him by word of mouth graciously to let them know his desires, but that she preferred to write to him for this favour." The King, she added, "should not doubt her obedience, or her desire to please him in all; she was extremely anxious for opportunities of being with him, and should it please him to increase the number of such opportunities, she would enjoy them with as much ardour as pleasure." Louis XV. was grateful to his daughter for her deference, and especially "for having spared him a verbal explanation." He replied that "he was pained to see that the Dauphin showed no taste for society, and *exhibited a marked dislike of the fair sex*;" he desired that Madame Adelaide "should persuade him to be more sociable in his conduct, and win his promise to treat the ladies who were in the constant society of the King with politeness; finally he trusted that Madame would use *the influence she could exert on the whole of the family* in the furtherance of this object."¹

Her attempts at influence were attended by pitiful results. Mesdames Victoire and Sophie, and all her little world of nephews and nieces, declared to Madame Adelaide "that it was shameful to believe they wished her conduct to be the price paid for a certain bargain." The Princess was startled at this unanimous revolt, and informed her Mistress of the Robes that she must find some one else to negotiate, for she had presumed too much on her authority. The disappointed d'Aiguillon challenged Madame de Narbonne to keep her promise, and "arrived in a towering rage at Madame Du Barry's, swearing that he was betrayed on all sides." But the favourite too was learning to value men by their successes, and did not deign to reply. "The position of the Duke d'Aiguillon," wrote Mercy, "is considerably worse. He is visibly losing ground with the favourite, who is again

¹ The account is Mercy's, the words italicised being those actually used by the King.

receiving all his enemies. The Chancellor and some of the Ministers have joined the Marshal de Soubise, and the Duke d'Aiguillon will infallibly be lost if he does not find some means of restoring his dying favour with Madame Du Barry."

Though the favourite turned a cold shoulder on Monsieur d'Aiguillon, she did not desert him altogether, as the Count de Mercy feared. The Empress, who had never found reason to be dissatisfied with Choiseul, called the latter a great man because of the advantages she had gained through him; his successor seemed to her such a nonentity that she hoped to profit just by his insignificance. But if the Duke meant to keep his position he must needs avoid conflict and pursue his negative policy; in other words, he required tact, intelligence and firmness, qualities which the illustrious exile had never been called upon to display in the winning of his most striking triumphs. Times were difficult, affairs in a perilous state. The favourite, feminine and pliable, was the minister's one frail support against the hatred of his enemies, and the breaking loose, dreaded by Voltaire, of "that enormous monster called the public." In spite of his expected disgrace nothing happened during the stay at Compiègne. Saint Louis' day, August 25, was, as usual, celebrated with great pomp, and on the 30th the Court returned to Versailles.

The Du Barry family, evidently in marrying mood, witnessed yet another union, that of the Chevalier Nicolas-Elie, Jean's third brother, to Michèle de Fumel, a rich and noble heiress. The bridegroom, a former pupil of the Ecole Militaire, and a Colonel of the Queen's Regiment, had just been nominated Captain of the Guards to the Count d'Artois. For, short, fat and ungraceful as he was, his good conduct had won him the esteem of all, even of the enemies of the mistress. With the Royal permission he took the title of Marquis, which ran in his wife's family. The Roué, as the head of his family, had the honour of a long audience of Louis XV., which was much remarked on. Perhaps he spoke then to His Majesty of the bold wish he

cherished of being admitted to the "pious Order" of the Knights of Malta, and dared to beg that he might be authorised to commence proceedings for that purpose.¹ He was indeed capable of any presumption in attempting to gain his ends, and an audience that appeared to interest the monarch was an exceptional opportunity. Before the departure for Fontainebleau the Countess presented the bride to the Royal Family. Her gift to the bridegroom was a Sèvres dinner service, "patterned with small roses," that had been much admired in the exhibition of the factory's products at Versailles.

This year, for the last time, the Salon of the Louvre boasted representations of the favourite on canvas and in marble. Drouais had made Floras the fashion as Nattier had once made Hebes, and Madame Du Barry did not fail to adopt the allegorical device. Her painter was not so happy as in his earlier works, and produced too drooping a goddess for the taste of the age. He portrayed her in an elegant *négligé* that left her bosom and pearl-encircled arms bare. On her head, that he made so insipid, was a crown of roses, and she wore an expression of innocence, the "virginal air" of Abbé Georgel's description.

But Madame Du Barry was pleased with this Flora, Drouais' fifth portrait of her, and she had several copies made for her friends. The painter's account for the year mentions "a copy of the portrait of the Countess as Flora, retouched from nature, for the Marshal de Soubise." In 1774 four others, probably by Madame Drouais, who collaborated with the artist, were given to Monsieur d'Aiguillon, Mademoiselle Du Barry, the Prince des Deux-Ponts and

¹ They were begun at the end of the year and supported by the Duke d'Aiguillon, who asked de Fleury, the Maltese Ambassador in Paris, to assure the Grand-Master that the King not only did not disapprove of the favour being granted, but that he would even be pleased. De Fleury wrote letters and contradicted them, spun out the delicate transaction and played with the Roué's feverish ambition as well as he could. The death of Louis XV. was just in time to save the Grand-Master the difficulty of refusing. The whole story is told by Monsieur C. Espéran in the *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles*, Vol. v., pp. 308 *et seq.*

Madame de Montrabé, and the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel received a "full-length portrait of the Countess" as a Muse.

Reproductions of the portraits of the favourite were seen all over the world, but in France the most popular work was Pajou's celebrated bust, also exhibited in this year's Salon. This item in the sculptor's accounts is followed by that of "a medallion of Madame's portrait made for the villa at Louveciennes and placed above a door." Lastly, some German works, established in the Faubourg du Temple, made a life-sized porcelain bust after a model by the same master, and the first copy was given to Mademoiselle Chon.

During the interval between Compiègne and Fontainebleau the King tried to divert his eternal melancholy by several short journeys. He spent a day at Saint-Ouen, a night at Louveciennes; at Choisy he was present at an entertainment improvised by the Countess, a heroic ballet, *Zénis et Almasie*, to which the Duke de Nivernais had composed the music, though he denied having done so. The words were attributed to the Duke de la Vrillière, but were acknowledged by Chamfort, "the sham Duke" as Mademoiselle Arnould called him. Besides these noble collaborations there were only the Sieur Laval's "plebeian" ballets. The chief actors at the Opera undertook the performance, and the audience was enchanted with the brilliant decorations, and "the melodious and lyrical words." The evening had begun by *La feinte par amour*, a short play by Dorat, who replied with a madrigal to the compliments of Louis XV. and the Dauphine.

Madame Du Barry being busied with the preparations for the marriage of the Count d'Artois, the task of selecting the repertory for Fontainebleau had been left to the Duke de Richelieu. Papillon de La Ferté was in despair, for all the plans were changed from day to day, there was no gravity in the meetings, no means of coming to any agreement with the actors. "He went to fetch them sweets and oranges which they snatched from one another's hands," wrote the discouraged Master of the Ceremonies.

Yet the favourite would not intervene. Her temporary preoccupation was augmented by a very natural fear of future trouble, for the state of the King's health was by no means reassuring. Court gossip no longer interested her, though she protested against the accusation that she was responsible for the prolonged exile of the Countess de Grammont. She offered to intercede for the lady's speedy return on condition that the Dauphine would admit the Viscountess Adolphe to her carriage. The latter's kinship with the Prince de Soubise allowed of making such a claim. But matters ended there, for the Dauphine felt humiliated by her small authority and declined the favourite's offer. Nevertheless she took the young Viscountess with her to the subsequent hunts.

On October 6 the Court came to Fontainebleau. While still preparing for the arrival of Marie-Thérèse of Savoy, the Countess occupied herself chiefly with plays and with the chase. For the last time this lithe Diana hunted the stag in the Royal forest. Saint Hubert's day that year was remarkable. The Princesses and the favourite rode, while in the coaches that followed were the Marquise and the Viscountess Du Barry, Mesdames de Mirepoix, de Valentinois, and d'Aiguillon, whom the favourite was compelled to acknowledge the tenderest of friends.

To please the Duchess her ladyship revived her interest in the fate of the minister. The latter had just discovered a strange "conspiracy," which turned out to be no more than "the King's secret" half unravelled. The man at the head of His Majesty's secret diplomacy, the Count de Broglie, was betrayed by one of his adherents. In order to deceive public opinion the King dissimulated and exiled the Count to his estate at Ruffec, while he imprisoned his ordinary agents, Ségur, Favier and Du Mouriez, in the Bastille. The Marquis de Monteynard was also compromised, but to the surprise of the Ambassadors, remained in the ministry. Mercy and Maria Theresa, however, were kept informed by disloyal clerks, and knew that the Marquis maintained a correspondence with His Majesty's secret agents. Soon the

mystery was cleared up, and d'Aiguillon was able to turn it to his own advantage in overthrowing Monteynard, whom he succeeded as Minister for War.

Madame Du Barry would not listen to politics before the wedding of the Count d'Artois. She was busy forming the household of the Princess. Madame de Forcalquier was to be Lady of Honour, Madame de Bairbon-Busset Mistress of the Robes, Monsieur de Chabrillan, the son-in-law of d'Aiguillon, Chief Equerry, Monsieur de Vintimille, Gentleman Usher, etc. Finally, she sent her brother-in-law, the Marquis Du Barry, to meet the Countess d'Artois, and included the Marquise among the ladies who were to accompany her. The jewels for the wedding presents were provided by Aubert, jeweller to the King, at the instance of the favourite;¹ to her, too, the programme of entertainments was submitted and she arranged the list of guests.

"On November 14 the King and the Royal Family met the Countess d'Artois two leagues from Fontainebleau. This first interview passed off in the ordinary way, and was noteworthy only for the Count d'Artois' eager enthusiasm and the satisfaction he at first displayed at the looks of his bride." Mercy described the newcomer to his sovereign in no flattering terms. Yet the young Princess was not without attraction in spite of a nose that was too long and a figure that was too thin. She was fair and had beautiful dark eyes, that now were full of shy hesitation. That she was received by her sister without much enthusiasm before this splendid Court only embarrassed her the more.

Marie Antoinette took the place of "old mother" at the wedding festivities. On arriving at Versailles the young Princess was first of all taken to her toilette. The Marshal de Richelieu handed her the presents of His Majesty, a watch, a chatelaine and a snuffbox, all set with diamonds. The customary banquet took place after the religious

¹ La Ferté wrote on November 5: "I have received from Madame Du Barry all the jewels for the wedding presents which she had ordered from the Sieur Aubert. . . . I took them to the Marshal who, quite rightly, thought them not at all beautiful. He will speak of it to Madame Du Barry."

ceremony and the distribution of the gifts. "One felt as if in a fairy palace, such a blaze of diamonds was there, jewels of wellnigh incalculable value. Only the Royal Family and the Princes are admitted to this banquet, as is well-known. The King was in the middle, and opposite His Majesty was Madame Du Barry, radiant like the sun in her five millions worth of gems." All night workmen were busy dismantling the banqueting-hall, and on the Wednesday a performance of the opera *Isménor* was given, a play much approved by the Countess, which, "although suitable to the occasion, was not much appreciated." The favourite had thought to pay court to the young pair by having appropriate touches introduced into this work of Desfontaines, but the most flattering praises left them quite unmoved. Madame Du Barry applauded, which did not prevent the King from saying to the Countess d'Artois at the end of the performance: "My daughter, have you yawned very much?"

The State ball was magnificent, having been attended by a numerous and brilliant Court. "Nothing more beautiful could be imagined," wrote Madame Du Deffand to Walpole; "Madame de Lauzun carried off the prize for gracefulness, for dress and for the minuet, the Viscountess Du Barry that for beauty of face and figure. Her aunt [the favourite] has many staunch admirers, and most men prefer her to the niece." The queen of these fêtes was then in the bloom of her thirtieth year, and her blonde loveliness had nothing to fear from the proximity of the youngest beauties.

The festivities ended with a masked ball, at which the favourite wore a domino of white silk, trimmed with flowers and net. Then followed the usual series of performances. Richelieu maliciously scandalised the Dauphin by his choice of Monsigny's *Don Pasquin d'Avalos*, a play full of coarse buffoonery. He wished to avenge the sufferings of the audience who had been made to listen to the trivialities of Lulli's *Bellérophon* as produced by the Sieur Berton, director of the Opera, a revival that cost no less than one hundred thousand écus. Voltaire's last tragedy, *Les Lois de Minos*, was not performed, in spite of the author's wishes, nor was



THE COUNT D'ARTOIS, AFTERWARDS CHARLES X OF FRANCE

Les Barmécides, at which La Harpe showed even more surprise than anger.

In the midst of all this merry-making Louis XV. went through the tragic experience of witnessing the death of his most faithful friend, the Marquis de Chauvelin. His Majesty was at Madame Du Barry's for supper, and among the usual gathering of some intimate friends was the Marquis. After his game of whist Chauvelin "had stood leaning over the back of the chair of Madame de Mirepoix, who was playing at another table. He joked with the lady, but the King, who was opposite the Marquis, noticed a sudden change in his face, and asked him if he was well. That very moment he fell down dead." The King cried at once for "a priest!" and "absolution!" a proof that the thought of religion was ever uppermost in his anxious mind. A priest, sent for in great haste, gave "conditional absolution," and the King was not to be reassured until he heard that the dying man's pulse still beat, and that he had been able to receive the sacrament.

M. de Chauvelin was fifty-seven at the time of his death. He had used his talents in the service of diplomacy, but for long had been satisfied with the reputation of being the most amiable of courtiers. "Every one regrets his loss," wrote Madame Du Deffand; "he was undoubtedly the man to pick out as the representative of what we mean by an agreeable Frenchman." The news of his sudden death gave Choiseul "such a violent shock" that the Duchess, his wife, took alarm. That Louis XV. was affected by the event may be imagined, and he would speak of it to his mistress with the peculiar bitterness and the insistence on details which the thought of death always inspired in him. The favourite, too, lamented the loss of Chauvelin, for he had been a loyal supporter among many who were indifferent or inimical to her.

In spite of the shadow of grief that hovered for a moment over the Court, life there pursued its feverish course. Richelieu himself mourned for his beloved daughter, the Countess d'Egmont, and yet did not give up his official duties. In

such a continual whirl and tumult of pleasures, laughter was so close to tears that it was impossible to retire for meditation. The mockery and wit of Fontainebleau was at this moment being exercised on the astonishing union between the dowager Duchess de Chaulnes, Lady in waiting to the Dauphine, and the young Gyac,¹ superintendent of the Household of the Princess. Of course the libellers drew on the worst scurrilities in their repertory in honour of the occasion, but the old lady, being of the opinion that "to a bourgeois a Duchess was never more than thirty," took very little notice of them. The misalliance, however, displeased the King and annoyed Marie Antoinette extremely, while the favourite was one of the first to cry out on the scandal.

In the comparative peacefulness of Versailles at the end of the year, Madame Du Barry applied herself to the final organization of her library, and had recourse to expert advice for her purpose. Once when admiring the Duke de la Vallière's beautiful books, she had met his librarian, the Abbé Rive, one of the most learned scholars of the age. She offered him work with her, which he accepted, and the advice he gave her was undoubtedly valuable in developing her collection and directing her reading. The studies that the Abbé Vermond expected of Marie Antoinette were less interesting, and certainly less seriously pursued than those of the Countess.

Madame Du Barry did not give all her time to reading, but busied herself in occupations that were no less dear to her heart. New Year was approaching, and with it the time for choosing pretty and appropriate presents. But there was not much fitness, thought some, in the indiscreet attempt of his mistress to suggest to the King his present to Madame la Dauphine. A Paris jeweller was the owner of a pair of

¹ See Mercy's report to Maria Theresa of November 12. At the same time he mentions a further conversation with Madame Du Barry on the subject of the Dauphine, and of the dismissal of Monsieur de Monteynard from the War Office. Although the *Anecdotes* accuse the favourite of some responsibility for this dismissal, she appears to be entirely innocent of it.

earrings composed of four brilliants of uncommon size, which were valued at 700,000 livres. Marie Antoinette had already begun to exhibit a great taste for jewellery, and the favourite took it into her head to let the Princess understand that, if she so desired, the trinket would be given her by the King. The Count de Noailles undertook the negotiations, but the Dauphine replied that she was satisfied with the jewels she already possessed, a lesson that the favourite took to heart.¹ Marie Antoinette was not ignorant of how much she was indebted to her ladyship for the kindnesses of His Majesty, but this time her intervention had been too direct. Yet Marie Leczinska had often been known to accept gifts from Louis XV. that were suggested by Madame de Pompadour.

This time Maria Theresa approved of the conduct of the Dauphine : " My daughter's refusal to accept a gift through the mediation of the favourite is quite as it should be ; the point is one on which I am very particular, and I do not know how to forgive the Empress of Russia for having accepted, and even displayed, her subject Orloff's gift of a superb diamond. . . ." Yet the day was to come when a Queen of France would adorn herself with the white plume of a Lauzun.

Madame Du Barry consoled herself for the unfortunate outcome of her proposal by spending lavishly on her presents this New Year's Day. Many of her gifts were Sèvres ware chosen at the factory or at the Versailles exhibition, such as " a pierced breakfast service," a coffee-pot with a floral Chinese pattern, a " Boucher child," goblets " with portraits on a gold ground." To His Majesty she gave " a suit of patterned silver, with very costly lilac spangles ; the waistcoat and facings of coloured stuff similarly embroidered." For Richelieu, d'Aiguillon, the Marquis and the Viscount Du Barry she had swordknots, and to her

¹ Mercy adds the following reflection : " I must observe that the temptation was the Countess Du Barry's own device, for if the proposed step had been more seriously reflected on, or prompted by advice, I should certainly have been one of the first to be consulted." (A letter of January 19, 1774.)

dearest friend she gave an armchair, with an "embroidered design in silk of birds and a trap."

The *Almanach de Liège* began the year 1774 by foretelling much sorrow "to a great lady in very high favour," who was to "play her part for the last time" in April. The Countess Du Barry was superstitiously startled at the prediction, and seemed to think she could affect her fate by having the almanac withdrawn from circulation. Otherwise the year began auspiciously enough. Wearing a charming gown *à la d'Artois* she paid her visit to the King on the morning of January 1, "accompanied by her two ladies of honour, exactly as if she were of the Royal Family," wrote the Duke de Croÿ, "namely, the Duchess d'Aiguillon and the Duchess de Mazarin." The visits to the Royal Family passed off uneventfully and with much serenity on both sides.

Then in her turn she received her friends, more numerous than ever, and among the strangers of note was young Fersen, who was later so dear to Marie Antoinette. He was sixteen at this time, and scarcely took any notice of the Dauphine, but he wrote in his diary: "On New Year's Day I was told one had to go to Versailles to pay homage to the King, and to be present at the ceremony of the Order of the Holy Ghost. At ten o'clock I was at Versailles. The ceremony was a mass attended by the King and all the Knights in full dress. After having dined I went with the Baron de Creutz to pay my respects to Madame Du Barry; she spoke to me for the first time." To the sentimental youth she was evidently no more than the woman favoured by Europe's greatest King, the friend of his own sovereign and the beauty whom poets vied in celebrating.

The literary almanacs of 1774 are full of the name of the Countess. The *Almanach des Muses* reproduced Meister's dedication to her in his translation of Gessner, published the year before; and the *Almanach des Flores* of the Sieur Douin, a Captain of Infantry, was composed entirely in her honour. The latter work consisted of fifty floral designs, together with the most surprising mottoes and horoscopes. The copy

given to the Countess contained a pen profile of her,¹ and the following rather unsuccessful madrigal :

A la plus belle.

Je dormais ; le maître des Dieux
Me dit : " Je sais ce que tu veux ;
Choisis ou déesse ou mortelle,
Pour lui consacrer tes couplets."
Quoi ? lui dis-je, une bagatelle ?
—Ne crains rien, je te le permets.
—Je choisirai donc la plus belle . . .

Such lyrical excesses could not but offend the taste of some fastidious people, who replied with the *Épître à Margot*, maliciously attributed to that most gallant of poets, the honeyed and affected Dorat. The clever little poem was a great success, and every one thought they recognised the favourite in the shepherdess with the pretty eyes :

Un seul de ses regards vaut mieux
Que fortune, esprit et naissance . . .
Pour apprendre qui doit me plaire,
Irai-je consulter d'Hozier ?
Non, l'aimable enfant de Cythère
Craint peu de se mésallier . . .
Bientôt peut-être le destin
La fera marquise ou comtesse.
Joli minois, coeur libertin
Sont bien des titres de noblesse. . . .

Dorat was disturbed at the trick played on him and vociferously disclaimed all responsibility for these ironical compliments.²

¹ The portrait was by the Sieur Chevalier, Lieutenant of Infantry, and formerly an engineer, who had also drawn the fifty floral designs. In the favourite's copy, preserved in the Versailles library, these drawings are coloured. The little volume is a gem of book-binding skill, probably that of Derosme ; it is in red morocco, with gilt edges, and the arms of the Countess and the "boutez" on the cover.

² "The scandal this trifle caused made him think it necessary to disclaim authorship, so as to escape the anger of the powerful woman whom her enemies recognised in the portrait of Margot." *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. vii., p. 132.

He replied as follows to the anonymous writer :

Ta roturière Dêité,
Malgré tes chants et ton estime,
Flatte fort peu ma vanité.
Jouis en paix de ta victoire,
Heureux amant, garde ton lot,
De grand cœur je te rends ta gloire,
Tes vers, ta muse et ta Margot.

Thus he hoped to escape the Bastille, to which mode of repression the favourite might for once have resorted. His offence, however, was small—it was but the witticism of a man of letters—compared with an obscene publication that was just coming out, entitled: *The secret Memoirs of a woman of the town, or an Essay on the adventures of the Countess Du Barry . . . from her cradle to the bed of honour*. The horror was printed in London in four volumes, and the favourite was informed of its publication by the pamphleteer himself, Théveneau de Morande. The author cynically pointed out the means of buying his silence; he demanded “5,000 louis in cash, and a 4,000 livres pension for himself to revert to his wife and son.”¹ Voltaire and Marigny had both recently suffered from his abominable extortion of hush-money. The Count de Lauraguais had got rid of the wretch by giving him “a shower of blows with his cane, by which means he forced from him a receipt.” To Madame Du Barry’s complaint, which Monsieur d’Aiguillon conveyed to the Ambassador, His Britannic Majesty replied that “no opposition would be made to this monster being removed from the kingdom, drowned in the Thames or smothered . . . provided that everything was carried out with the greatest secrecy.” Monsieur de Sartines sent a detachment of his agents to England, but Morande baffled the French police, and was no less pressing in his demands on the mistress, Monsieur d’Aiguillon and the Chancellor. Six million copies were already said to be printed, and cases ready packed for sending to the Continent. The French Ambassadors at foreign Courts were

¹ Paul Robiquet, *Théveneau de Morande*, p. 37.

given orders to prevent its circulation, but such commands never resulted in much.

At the same time a discreet and clever man left for London to negotiate the business. This was Beaumarchais, the author of the *Barbier de Séville*, who was then more famous for his notorious lawsuit against Councillor Goezman, which he had just lost. In London he worked in concert with Louis' secret agent, the mysterious Chevalière d'Eon, in reality a Chevalier. Morande wanted only to be bribed; the amount of compensation was reduced as much as possible,¹ and the volumes in existence were burnt in a brick oven in the country. The Duke d'Aiguillon would have liked to learn what people at Court gave the pamphleteer the information through which he was able to collect certain dangerous particulars, but Beaumarchais, in a memorandum addressed to Louis XV., declared that he refused "to play the infamous part of an informer."

All these proceedings on Madame Du Barry's account were a proof "of her assured position and authority," wrote Mercy to Maria Theresa. But "in spite of the fact that wherever she is concerned the King's blindness seems as unalterable as it is deplorable, the favourite's party is full of doubts and fears that the time may come when the monarch will collect himself and commune with his soul."

The King was growing old; his health had for some time been failing; men of his own age were struck down by death almost under his very eyes; ² all causes combined to work on his Bourbon piety. The Carnival came to an end, and the annual agony of Lent began again for the mistress. Candlemas Day opened with a sermon full of inspired assurance from the Abbé Rousseau. The severity of the new Bishop

¹ The money paid was 20,000 livres in cash, and besides that an interest of 4,000 livres. The book must have been exceptionally dangerous to be considered worth such a compensation; Théveneau spoke later, in his *Réplique à Brissot*, of the importance he attached to it.

² After that of Monsieur de Chauvelin occurred the sudden deaths of the Marshal d'Armentières and of the Abbé de La Ville, who was struck with apoplexy at the King's levée.

of Sénez, the Abbé de Beauvais, was of another order. Already in the previous Lent he had astonished the Court by the vigour of his denunciations. They hoped that a bishopric would make him more reasonable, but not at all; he inveighed just as harshly against the vices of his hearers. "He preached an extraordinary sermon on Maundy Thursday before the King, and thundered with flaming eloquence, speaking truths that only the sacredness of the place could justify and let pass unreprimanded." He even went so far as to predict the approaching end of the reign; "Forty days," he cried, "and Nineveh is no more."

The year before, the King had been satisfied to answer the courtiers who attacked the preacher, that the priest "did his duty," but this time he was deeply agitated, and spoke often of "the fearful account that must one day be made to the Supreme Being of the use made of the life He has granted us on this earth." The Countess felt with anguish that her allies and dependants were ready to betray her at the slightest indication of Fortune turning against her. She was no longer herself; dissatisfied with her desertion, Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa on March 22: "I have recently had hints of certain underhand intrigues against the favourite. . . . The Duke d'Aiguillon owes everything to Madame Du Barry, but his demeanour betrays dissatisfaction with her. . . . Besides she is exacting and inconsiderate, and all this may lead to new combinations and issues."

Tortured at once by religious scruples and the desires of the flesh, Louis XV. would perhaps sacrifice his mistress unless she could protect herself. But, wise in her love, she surrounded the taciturn old man with the tenderest care. She impressed herself on his heart and mind and soul, and made his reliance on her constant love and gentleness a dear and secret habit that he could not renounce. She became his only adviser, and banished from his presence the treachery of ministers, the snares of women. Above all she sought to amuse him. Every week they went to Bellevue and to Marly; at Choisy she gave an entertainment,

and since His Majesty would not leave Versailles, the actors gave their performance in Madame Du Barry's apartments.

The terrible Easter fortnight was at last over without untoward incident, and Louis had not received the sacrament. The favourite's spirits revived, but she did not give up her careful watch on her surroundings. For attempts were being made to give the King a new mistress, and the beautiful Dutchwoman who was being prepared for the part might prove dangerous.¹ A correspondent of the Prince Dmitri Golitzyne, a former Ambassador in Paris, has justified the fears of the Countess in a curious letter describing the last intrigues connected with the Royal alcove :

The Hague, *May 3, 1774.*

My Prince,—As changes in the French Ministry occur at fairly regular intervals (each one being given a reign of six months on an average, I believe), and there have been no signs of such a thing for some months, those who know think that this unnatural peace is only apparent, and that the ashes are still glowing. In a word, some friends have warned me that an event may quite well take place very soon, which will surprise a good many people. This is no less than the dismissal of Madame Du Barry on physician's orders. You may think all this a joke, my Prince, but I assure you nothing could be more true. The Royal Physician has declared that Madame Du Barry is too young for His Most Christian Majesty. She will therefore take the waters at Spa this summer, and since a post as important as hers could not possibly be left vacant for a moment, it will be given to a somewhat older lady (always in accordance with medical orders, of course), this lady being Madame Neuwerkerke, who was so famous as Madame Pater. She is an intimate friend of the Duke de Choiseul, who, one therefore concludes, will soon reappear on the scenes, while the Duke d'Aiguillon will be dismissed ; indeed, he has so far only been supported by Madame Du Barry. All that I have seen here during the last few days

¹ This Madame de Neuwerkerke (formerly Madame Pater) is referred to in the *Anecdotes*, where she is said to have demanded a secret marriage with the King ; but who can know exactly what happened in these affairs ?

confirms me in believing in the likelihood of this happening. Madame Pater is a Dutchwoman whose fortune was dissipated by her husband. Through the Duke de Choiseul she enjoyed a considerable pension in France, all of which she lost when he fell, and last year I saw her in very reduced circumstances. But for about a month she has been spending a considerable sum of money here, and has arranged through Monsieur de Noailles, the French Ambassador, for the payment of some of the debts of her husband, who was going to be imprisoned, and for the departure of the husband for India.

Spring came, and the King went to spend a few informal days at his delightful new Trianon before undertaking the more important journeys. As usual, the favourite accompanied him. On the morning of April 27 he felt unwell, but nevertheless followed the hunt in his coach in the evening. On his return he shut himself up with Madame Du Barry, who tended him as well as she could, reassuring him all the while. But the pain did not cease. During the night His Majesty sent for Lemonnier, his Physician in ordinary, and asked that the Countess should be called. "But as yet there seemed no foundation for the King's anxiety, and Lemonnier, who was acquainted with his natural tendency to be alarmed at nothing, held this anxiety to be the effect of such a tendency rather than the precursor of a disease." Madame Du Barry kept the King by her until three o'clock in the afternoon, no one else besides his valet-de-chambre and Lemonnier coming near him. Monsieur d'Aiguillon was of the opinion that he should stay at Trianon until the illness passed off, but on the other hand the Royal Family was becoming anxious, and La Martinière, Surgeon in ordinary to the King, ordered that he should return to Versailles.

The malady grew worse. On the 29th His Majesty was bled by Lemonnier, who called in three Paris physicians for consultation: Lassonne, the doctor of the Dauphine, Bordeu, who was the favourite's, and Lorry, the Duke d'Aiguillon's. The courtiers came in crowds, and the Officers of the Guard received their orders by the bedside

of the King, who spoke in a hoarse voice. In the evening he sent La Borde, his valet-de-chambre, for Madame Du Barry; all others went, leaving him alone with the physicians and the mistress. Some hours later smallpox declared itself.

Although public malice had put into circulation the most obnoxious anecdotes about the sovereign's illness, and had let it be known in various ways "that there is nothing small about the great," His Majesty was dying of confluent smallpox. Fearless of contagion and with admirable devotion, Mesdames watched by the bedside of their father during the daytime, and at night the Countess, no less courageous, took their place.

The nature of his illness was concealed from the King for fear that the shock of knowing would kill him, but at the same time there was much concern for the welfare of his soul. The Archbishop of Paris was already in attendance, having been sent for by Mesdames. Richelieu had kept him away from the King, whose very bedchamber was filled with the disputes and cries of the two parties. The Duke de Liancourt has described the state of affairs in a few embittered lines, poisoned by his hatred of Louis XV., the mistress and her supporters. The one side insisted on confession, which was feared by the other, for on it depended the dismissal of the favourite. Lonely and suffering, the latter sometimes exclaimed: "I displease the whole family; may I not go!" And at other times she contended "that the King's custom of seeing her made her feel sure she was useful."

On the afternoon of May 4, Louis XV., examining his hands, exclaimed: "It is smallpox! it is smallpox!" and no one had the courage to reply. In the evening at about a quarter to twelve, the Countess was stroking the patient's wasted brow as he had asked, when he said: "Now that I know my condition, I cannot allow a repetition of the Metz scandal. If I had known what I know, you should not have been permitted to come. I owe myself to God and my people. So to-morrow you must withdraw. Tell

d'Aiguillon to come to me to-morrow at ten o'clock." She made no murmur and rose to go, but on the threshold of the room she fainted. All night she cried in agony. On the following day the Duke received orders from the King to make arrangements for the departure of the favourite. The carriage left at four o'clock in the afternoon, taking her with her sisters-in-law and the Duchess d'Aiguillon to Rueil, close to Louveciennes.

At about six o'clock, the King said : " Fetch La Borde ! " Then, as usual, he said : " Go and find Madame Du Barry ! " La Borde answered, " Sire, she is gone ! " " Where is she gone ! " " To Rueil, Sire ! " " Ah ! already ! " After a while the Duke d'Aiguillon, who had taken all the arrangements on himself with the Marshal de Richelieu, entered, apparently from the interior of the apartment, and the King said : " Have you been to your château ? " He was thinking, therefore, only of his mistress, and said nothing of preparing to die. At Rueil the Countess received a crowd of visitors, who came to reassure her as to the condition of the invalid.

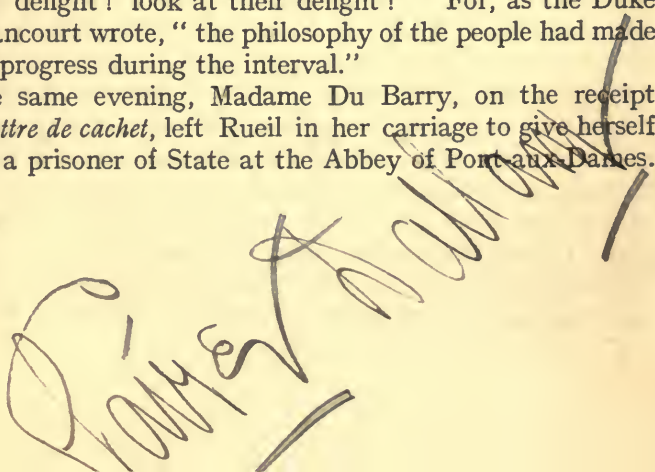
Only on May 7, the eighth day of his illness, did he confess to the Abbé Maudoux, who had not quitted his bedside. Two days later he received extreme unction. He was laid on a camp-bed in the middle of the room, with the curtains drawn back, and the light of a number of candles held by priests kneeling round the bed, shone on him. The King " was motionless, his mouth open, his face neither deformed nor showing any signs of agitation, but towards the end swollen and copper-coloured like a Moor or negro." The Bishop of Senlis, standing upright, said prayers in a loud voice, and the chaplain held before the eyes of the dying man a large crucifix, which from time to time he lowered for him to kiss. All present showed deep dejection, more from etiquette than from feeling. In the other room the ministers were disputing.

Forty hours' prayers were offered up in all the churches. The people gathered below the windows of the Château, waiting for the proclamation of death. But not until the

following day did the agony begin, at eleven o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, May 10. He was completely conscious until the last moment. "At one o'clock, in the death-rattle, he still heard me," wrote the Abbé Maudoux; "the physicians thought he had lost consciousness; I rose to make sure, and said to him: 'Sire, does Your Majesty suffer much?' The rattle was interrupted, and he said: 'Ah! ah! ah! terribly!' As long as I live I shall never forget those three Ahs! I pray to God that I may die as he did." "At a quarter past three Louis XV. was no more. The doors were flung open, and the Duke de Bouillon, the Lord Chamberlain, advanced to the railing that partitioned the *Ceil-de-Boeuf*, and said: 'Messieurs, the King is dead.'" Away at Rueil, Madame Du Barry wept; the Duchess d'Aiguillon, who was compelled to leave her in order to be present at a dinner given by the Minister to the Ambassadors, sobbed all the evening.

The nature of the King's illness had made very prompt funeral obsequies necessary, and they took place without any ceremony, in conformity with his formally expressed desire. On May 12, at ten o'clock in the evening, the hearse left Versailles for Saint-Denis, escorted by fifty Life Guards, and by pages, altogether three hundred horsemen, bearing torches and riding at a trot. The procession was received on its arrival at the Royal vault by a hooting mob. Those who had once given Louis XV. the name of "The Well-beloved" now shouted before his tomb: "Look at the ladies' delight! look at their delight!" For, as the Duke de Liancourt wrote, "the philosophy of the people had made great progress during the interval."

The same evening, Madame Du Barry, on the receipt of a *lettre de cachet*, left Rueil in her carriage to give herself up as a prisoner of State at the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames.



CHAPTER V

MADAME DU BARRY AND THE ARTS

Madame Du Barry as a Patron of the Arts—The “ Du Barry ” Style—Her Rooms at Versailles—The Furniture—How the Favourite passed the Day—Her Household—Her Luxury—Building of the Villa at Louveciennes—The Bronzes by Gouthière—The Château of Louveciennes—The Art Collections—Purchase of the Binet Villa and the building of an Hôtel at Versailles—The Favourite and the Administration of the Privy Purse.

LOUIS XV. deserved better than the insults that followed his mortal remains to the grave. Men forgot his days of glory and Maurice de Saxe, his diplomatic triumphs and the Duke de Choiseul, and his last reforms inspired by Maupeou, which to some extent anticipated those of 1848. The despotism of which he was so ferociously accused was, besides, “ tempered by ballads.” He was subjected to the most lively attacks both in his capacity as head of the State, and as a private individual. No doubt the life of this victim of lust lent itself to scandal ; for long he thought of nothing but the satisfaction of his insatiable desires, but even in his debauchery he preserved the elegance of a Frenchman and a Bourbon.

When the sufferings of Marie Leczinska, “ the good Queen,” ended with her death, Madame Du Barry appeared, closed the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and for five years her beauty and affection were enough for the Well-Beloved, who felt himself growing old. That was the time of his life when history and libel have scourged him most. Yet his conduct compares favourably with the moral excesses of other sovereigns of the age, of the cynical and hateful Frederick, or of the madman, Ferdinand VI., or of great Catherine, debauchee and regicide. Moreover, whatever Louis’ personal failings and the vices of his reign may have been,

France still retained her moral influence over Europe and her great position among the nations, while in the world of art she was unrivalled.

Whatever criticism is allowed of the influence of favourites on politics—and its importance is usually exaggerated—at least their influence on art may be forgiven, since it never was other than beneficial. Not that they gave a particular direction to the æsthetic tendencies of their day, nor that their advice had any real effect on true genius, but they stimulated competition and encouraged talent by their luxurious fancies, by their demand for elaboration and taste for beautiful things, that a monarch's lavishness permitted them to gratify.

A whole world of great artists came into being through the work distributed by the little hands of the Queens, the Royal mistresses and the great ladies of Paris and Versailles ; and behind the bright constellations of masters shone the more modest lights of numbers of craftsmen, children of that vital French spirit which needs no more than happy environment to call forth its genius. With architects, sculptors and painters worked goldsmiths, jewellers, cabinet-makers, decorators, all who finished and perfected the dwelling of woman, the harmonious setting of her precious beauty.

The great lady carried refinement to an extreme, especially in the everyday articles of her toilette. Powder-horns, patchboxes, rouge-pots, flasks, glove-cases, ball-programmes, fans, sweet-dishes, all were of the most exquisite workmanship, in which the light and colour of gems played on surfaces of chased gold, on jasper, ivory or enamel, works of art indeed, if art is a question of proportion.

Moreover the divinities of these "enchanted Edens" were marvellously dressed : panier-dresses shot with gold, heavy diamond necklaces, aigrettes, wreaths, lace, all meant a world of work undertaken for each woman. If they exacted homage and tribute from genius, in return they dispensed honour and fortune. Queens and favourites were always powerful protectors, especially the latter.

Madame de Pompadour became famous for it, and Madame Du Barry too, with as much right, perhaps, but less pretentiousness. Besides, she enjoyed only five years of power, while for twenty years the Marquise influenced the proceedings of the Office of Works through her uncle, Tournehem, and her brother, Marigny.

With the coming of Madame de Pompadour the "rococo" style, wrongly described as *pompadour*, died out. A reaction towards purer line and the rediscovered beauty of the antique was beginning, and the change was completed during Madame Du Barry's time of favour. Architects showed the way to decorators, who were always slower to adopt new theories, and the excavations at Herculaneum seconded their efforts. "There is a very variable Louis XV. style," writes an art historian, "and by analogy a Louis XVI., and even a Marie Antoinette, style has been created. One is too liable to forget that from this point of view the term a 'Du Barry style' would be far more appropriate."¹

Delightful Petit-Trianon, the model of Louis XVI. art, was of Madame de Pompadour's time; at least the plans were submitted to her in 1762 by Gabriel, though it was opened by Madame Du Barry in 1769. The square château, with its terraced roof in Roman style, is of a stern purity of design that sets off its graceful Corinthian pillars. The interior decoration is all on large "classical" lines, while the gay French spirit has scattered on the narrow panels a profusion of crowns, fleurs-de-lys and pyramids of fruit, and wreaths of roses, poppies and ranunculus. The King's chamber looked out on the Botanic Garden of Grand-Trianon, where Claude Richard cultivated his rare flowers, and Bernard de Jussieu his exotic plants. Louis XV. was fond of gardening, and from his strawberry-beds came the beautiful fruit that was served at the little supper-parties in cups of Sèvres on tall silver-gilt feet. It was the very place for spring-time when one would fain live amid fragrant breezes

¹ Emile Molinier, *Le Mobilier au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, p. 169. Molinier here makes use of the theory supported by Monsieur Pierre de Nolhac against the Goncourts.

and glowing colours. Summer was spent in the various Royal Palaces, and winter at Versailles, the most exquisite corner of whose Château was Madame Du Barry's little gabled rooms.

With the growth of new customs requiring less formality and of the desire for more comfort and intimacy, many changes were effected in Louis XV.'s palace. Considerable repairs were undertaken on the coming of Marie Leczinska, who found the vast halls of stucco-work and marble too cold and lofty. This was the time when Verbeckt decorated the Petits Cabinets of the King, the gallery and rooms that were to become the home of the last mistress. The sculptor carved the rounded panels with curving scrolls, while J. Caffiéri chased the gilt bronze of frames and brackets.

When the charming rooms passed into Madame Du Barry's hands, she asked for certain general alterations and for further decorations. This work was directed by the Marquis de Marigny, who had so often performed similar services for his sister, Madame de Pompadour. Soon the colouring of the old wainscotting was gilded over, except in the dining-room, whose delicate cream and pale green made a break in the monotony of the many narrow rooms. The bed-chamber was exactly above that of Louis XV. Here, on each side of the white marble fireplace, was a rounded panel, one of which concealed a secret passage to the Royal Library. In the suite of salons the deep embrasures of the windows facing the Cour de Marbre were flooded with gilding. The dining-room looked out on the Cour des Cerfs, as also the antechamber, the bathroom, the wardrobe and several of the servants' offices. Adjoining the apartments of the Countess was the library that had once been Madame Adelaide's.¹

On her return from Fontainebleau in 1770, the favourite was able to take possession of her fascinating abode, to which a new bathroom had been added, decorated with bronzes by Gobert and carvings by Rousseau. In the suite

¹ See P. de Nolhac, *Le Château de Versailles sous Louis XV.*, which contains an unpublished plan of Madame Du Barry's rooms.

of rooms the new furniture harmonised well enough with the older panels, whose "rococo" style was not too riotous.

In the bedchamber, whose every detail was of an extraordinary elaboration, was a bed with four pillars, like the alcove which the favourite had desired, only the work had been too complicated to carry out. It seemed entirely made of precious metal, so well had the delicately-moulded wood-work been covered with gilt. The sculptor and Madame Du Barry herself had designed its straight lines; it was carved by Lanoix and gilded by Cagny. The little fluted columns reaching up to the canopy were wreathed with garlands of myrtle and laurel, and at the top festooned with roses; their pearl-encircled capitals were formed of acanthus leaves. On the surfaces of the two head-boards "two birds billing together" among flowers were represented. Around the canopy and entwining medallions ran wreaths of myrtle and roses, the "device" of the Countess found on all her artistic possessions. On the step was thrown a white carpet of figured Chinese silk, and a "white silk stuff," embroidered with roses, was used to drape the canopy, to curtain the windows and to cover the bed and the thirteen chairs, of which "one large one was for the King."

The chest-of-drawers of white satinwood was ornamented with five pictures in porcelain, three scenes after Watteau, and Comedy and Tragedy after Vanloo, all "most richly adorned with very finely finished bronze, and gilded with dull gold." Upon it stood a large blue bowl with gold rock-work "and miniature figures by Teniers, as well as two smaller ones similarly decorated." The writing-table, again, was a triumph of French porcelain with its "flowers on a green ground." On the mantelpiece a gold clock by Germain represented the three Graces supporting a vase, on which turned a dial, while a Cupid's arrow, the symbol of the period, indicated that in these rooms it was always time to love.

As a rule Madame Du Barry's day did not begin until nine o'clock, when the gilded shutters were thrown open, waking the fair sleeper surrounded by the lace of her sheets and



MADAME DU BARRY
From a painting by Gauthier-Dagoty

pillows. Her women then entered and wrapped her in her dressing-gown to conduct her to her bath. While in the perfumed water she would listen to her morning's post of petitions, notes from tradesmen, entreaties for help, business communications, letters from friends, and so forth. Back in her room, she put on her silk petticoats, and a morning-gown of Brussels lace, open at the neck and generously trimmed with ribbons, and Zamore served her with coffee in a silver cup.

Very soon after, with her hair still in a knot on the nape of her neck, she seated herself before the toilet-table, which the chambermaids had drawn forward so as to be in full daylight. The table itself was draped in white muslin; the golden mirror, chased by Roettiers de la Tour, was ornamented by an earl's coronet with two doves perched on sprays of myrtle and roses. Then began the procession of dealers, who had been waiting in the antechambers. Every day they brought some novelty, in which the imagination of their artistic craftsmen sought to surpass its previous achievement.

First of all came the Crown jewellers. The favourite was passionately fond of pearls, brilliants and gems of all kinds, with which she loved to adorn herself, but which she also collected in her caskets, that were marvels in themselves. Boehmer,¹ who was later involved in the intrigue of the Queen's necklace; Roüen, who was one of the witnesses in the case of the theft of Madame Du Barry's diamonds; Lecomte, Aubert,² Demay, Leblanc, Straz, all brought emerald necklaces, pearl bracelets, sets of rubies, magnificent diamonds, innumerable rings, engraved stones, cameos and intaglios, pendants, clusters of diamonds, pearl-embroidered slippers. To read the list of gems this woman owned is as dazzling as it is fatiguing.

Next to jewels, the greatest expenditure of the Countess was on dresses, hoop petticoats, full dress costumes, cloaks, gowns

¹ The account of "Böhmer of Paris, dealer in diamonds," amounted to 888,632 livres for the period from October 8, 1770, up to and including February 9, 1772.

² Aubert's account for two years amounted to 544,949 livres.

of velvet or cloth-of-gold, and the like. Mesdames Sigly and Pagelle were her dressmakers before the celebrated Bertin appeared. Buffault and Le Normand provided the materials, Gruel and Vanot brought blond lace, braid and pompoms, while she obtained Valenciennes and Venetian lace and embroidery from Davaux and Tripperet. Several workshops were employed in making her skirts, her mantles, her fine linen and muslin wear.

In the art of dress above all, Madame Du Barry gave supreme expression to her taste, to every ingenuity that her coquetry could devise. She inspired fashion, and imposed on it all her delightful whims. The doll that was sent every month to initiate Europe in Parisian modes always wore Madame Du Barry's latest creation. No one had ever dressed so well before, and she excelled all who came after her. At the wedding of the Count d'Artois, for instance, she wore a beautiful dress, whose every detail she had thought out herself. It was of "white satin shot with silver, over which was silver net, embroidered with rose and green spangles"; on the flounces were knots of myrtle, the corsage was embroidered with little roses, as also all the trimmings.¹ This marvellous creation was enhanced by the splendour of jewellery, from the diadem of opals on her head to the little gold slippers starred with diamonds on her feet.

For great occasions Nokelle was the favourite's hair-dresser, but on ordinary days Berline came with the perfumer, Vigier. As time went on, courtiers arrived and gathered around the be-ribboned table, from which nimble waiting-women had removed the ewer and basin of gold-

¹ From the innumerable descriptions of garments to be found in her accounts or the merchants' bills, we quote the following:

(1772) "A complete dress with white satin corsage on which a design of rose-wreaths, gold-spangled ribbons tying blue bouquets, all embroidered in silk, worked in pleats." A hoop-petticoat, ". . . silver foundation with a broad gold stripe, embroidered in fine gold thread, wreaths of flowers and carnations, little ribbons with shaded gold spangles, very rich." (1773) "A full dress costume of white velvet, the corsage embroidered with large and small spangles, shaded in various colours; further a very fine trimming for the edge of the skirt and train, all to match and very rich."

mounted crystal. The Countess replied to compliments and jokes, listened to stories, laughed her pretty childish laugh, and powdered her face all the while her beautiful hair was being piled high on her dainty head. Then with a little golden knife she carefully removed the powder; with the tip of her finger she took pomade from a china pot and "daubed" her face, and her cheeks grew pink and animated from the contents of six other little pots before her.¹ Small gold cases, snapped to with a diamond, contained blue for her veins, black for eyebrows and lashes, carmine for her lips and rose-pink for her nails. When the King entered, the atmosphere was laden with the mingled perfumes of opened flasks. Gradually the courtiers withdrew; the first waiting-woman dressed her Ladyship in a robe *sur la considération*, for after dinner she often went for a drive or paid her visits.

The household of the Countess was very large; the full dress livery was scarlet and gold, with knee-breeches and gold garters, the undress livery chamois and silver with silver garters. The two coachmen, the outriders, the three postilions, and the running footman wore a uniform of sky-blue cloth with silver braid.² The bearers of her beautiful sedan chairs wore scarlet and silver; a blue and silver livery was worn by the grooms, the stewards, the butler, the cooks, the night attendants, the porter and the gardeners. When Madame Du Barry stepped out of her chair to walk in the park, Zamore lifted the train of her dress and handed her an open parasol. The black child, of whom she was so fond, usually wore his hussar costume of "fluted rose-colour trimmed with silver," or the one of "flesh-coloured" silk, or white taffetas; in his gold-embroidered girdle was stuck

¹ See Fersen's diary in *Le comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*, by Baron Klinckowström, Vol. i., p. xv.

² Mademoiselle de Constant, when visiting Versailles in February, 1773, saw Madame Du Barry's carriage in the Place d'Armes, and described it in a letter: "She is extremely pretty; she wore a riding-habit open in front. Her coach is most elegant, blue with silver mouldings and fine paintings. Her lackeys wear blue, braided with silver. Her six horses were lively and full of mettle; they were bays, and the bridles, harness, etc., blue and silver." Lucie Achard, *Rosalie de Constant, sa famille et ses amis*, p. 61.

a little sword with a carved hilt. Sometimes she dressed him up so that he seemed all ribbons, spangles, pearls and lace ; she covered him with jewels, earrings, bracelets and necklaces, as if he were an idol.

At first Madame Du Barry's stables were at the hôtel de Luynes, where she also housed her domestics. The outriders Delorme and Duplessis bought her horses in London. La Vallée painted her coaches and sedan chairs, covering their decorative narrow panels with pastoral landscapes or *scènes galantes*. Among her carriages there was a *vis-à-vis* of such perfection that the favourite seldom used it ; she kept it as a precious work of art. It may be that the King, being jealous of this gift of d'Aiguillon, had forbidden her to use it, but it is not certain that it really was a present from the Duke. The masterpiece was in such accordance with her taste that it seems probable she herself invented every minute detail. Of the four gilded panels, two were painted with crowns of roses, over "two doves billing together." The others each bore a heart pierced by an arrow, above a quiver and torches. "These emblems were surmounted by a wreath of budding flowers, the most beautiful thing imaginable. . . . The coachman's seat, the lackeys' stand behind, the wheels, the stocks, the steps, were all of such finished refinement in every detail that one could not tire of admiring it. . . ." ¹ Below the coats-of-arms, the *Boutez* was inscribed.

The Countess used to return soon from her outings, for in her absence the King wearied. She changed her attire, to receive her circle of friends in the salon, whose two large sofas, eighteen chairs and one for the King, had been designed by Guichard and gilded by Cagny. The back and the arms were carved with trophies of love and with attributes of the chase, of fishing and of music, all entwined in jasmine and roses knotted with ribbons, while on the pale silk stuff were embroidered in more vivid colours a whole mass of "shaded" coronets.

¹ The writer of the *Mémoires secrets* seems to have inspected the carriage very thoroughly.

The favourite loved music ; Clicot had built for her an English pianoforte, with flutes and *galoubet*, a movement for the lute, and two for cymbals : the case which was made to contain the pipes and bellows was " of rosewood, inlaid with blue and white mosaic, and very richly ornamented with dull gilt bronze." Sometimes a narrow harpsichord was drawn into the salon, but the favourite instrument of the Countess was the harp, and she took diligent lessons of the master harpist, Hochbrucker.

Against one wall of this salon stood " a superb chest-of-drawers of the finest quality of old lacquerwork, a relief of richly-dressed monkeys on the middle panel, the friezes plated with ebony, the ornaments of chased bronze gilded with dull gold, the top of white marble. By the opposite wall was another chest-of-drawers ornamented with six plates of Sèvres porcelain of a flower and gold thread pattern." On the chests stood two bronze groups, *The Abduction of Helen*, and a Bacchanalian set of figures, by Sarrazin.

Below the large rock-crystal lustre in the middle of the room was a round table entirely covered with Sèvres porcelain, the centre picture of which represented a miniature by Leprince. This table, which still exists, is " the boldest and most perfect work of art ever produced " in porcelain. Pictures beloved by the age, adorned the walls, in beautifully carved frames. Rosy mountains, blue landscapes and mythological portraits were repeated in the large mirrors, then newly introduced, that replaced the former thick and heavy pier-glasses.

Tea was served on pedestals of silver and bronze with porcelain tops, and in the meanwhile conversations were carried on, that touched lightly and gaily on all subjects, even the driest. Scientific discussions were the fashion, and one day when there was some question as to the medical effects of mercury, the Countess showed great eagerness to learn. " What a good thing she has her mercurial innocence ! " was the biting remark of Madame de Luxembourg, who heard of everything.

When the King left for the Council meeting, Madame Du

Barry gave her private audiences. Then she spent much time on her evening toilet, and if after supper no play was being performed, Louis XV. often came to her rooms for his game of cards. They usually played in a second salon, whose furnishing was even more in harmony with the new style. On the mantelpiece was "a bronze ormolu clock in the form of a vase and a serpent, with a turning dial, the foot ornamented with three plates of porcelain on which were painted children on a blue ground, the forked tongue of the serpent being of marcassite." The tiers of one small table were inlaid with Sèvres, "a floral design on a green ground," on which were placed gold-mounted writing requisites. On the étagères were valuable caskets; a little chest of old lacquerwork with gold and venturine reliefs of "landscapes and monkeys" on a black ground; a box of sandalwood, containing the tea-set of crystal and gold, bought at Madame de Lauraguais' sale. Especially noteworthy were "a barometer and thermometer by Passemant, very richly mounted in bronze ormolu, ornamented with three tiles of Sèvres, painted with miniature groups of children."

An ivory backgammon board was "mounted on an inlaid rosewood table, ornamented with gilt bronze." The large card-box, lined with gold-laced blue taffetas, contained "four ivory quadrille boxes with the hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades inlaid in gold on each of the said boxes, and surrounded by a wreath with a knot of ribbons, also inlaid in gold; the twenty-four markers and the twenty counters marked also in gold with the hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades." The tables were of rosewood, covered with green velvet, "one for vingt-un with five sides, another for tri, four for piquet, and one long one of walnut-wood covered with green cloth, with a rosewood set."

The Royal card-parties at the favourite's usually included the Dukes de Duras, de La Vallière, de Laval and de Cossé, the Princes d'Hénin and de Soubise, the Count de Broglie, the Marquis d'Entragues; and among the women there were Madame de Mirepoix, that inveterate gambler, and Mesdames de Talmont, de Valentinois, d'Aiguillon and de

Montmorency. Madame Du Barry's gaming debts are entered in her accounts, and give some idea of the high play indulged in ; but she lived at a time when cards and counters were all the rage.

In spite of her numerous activities, the favourite yet found time to keep in touch with literary matters. She was fond of reading, much more so than those indifferent book-lovers, Mesdames de France and Marie Antoinette. Her elegantly bound volumes were collected behind the glass doors of the bookcases in the library. This room was furnished with six gilded oval armchairs carved with myrtle and roses, and in a recess was a couch above which a long looking-glass was let into the woodwork.

Among the many volumes that have been preserved,¹ a certain number, bound in red morocco and with gilt edges, have the arms and motto of the Du Barrys on the cover ; some are calf with the arms stamped on the back ; others again are in green morocco and more delicately tooled, but none so beautifully as the marvellous *Chansonnier* with its lace-like gilding. The Countess used to devote her more peaceful days to the study of history, on which subject she possessed many books. She also owned copies of the *Iliad*, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Golden Ass*, the works of Marot, Villon and Montaigne, the *Pensées* of Pascal, not to speak of editions of the minor poets of the eighteenth century, illustrated by Eisen, Gravelot or the younger Moreau. Then there were the works of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau. Novels with licentious engravings and Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* stood side by side, and a little further along the row could be read the title : *Vegetable rouge for the use of ladies*.

Such was the favourite's abode in pompous Versailles, where some ceremony was assigned to every hour. But Madame Du Barry wanted a dwelling after her own fancy, which she herself would design, whose details she would

¹ The Versailles Library owns 349 books that belonged to Madame Du Barry ; others are in the Petit-Palais Museum, in the library of the Ecole Saint-Cyr, and in private collections.

conceive and inspire, a "folly" whose creation would give full scope to the exercise of her imagination and her capricious originality. And when Louis XV. gave her for life the little château of Louveciennes, she at once had the white villa built in its gardens.

Its harmonious classical lines, like those of a Roman temple, rose above the terrace looking out on the Seine. The architect Ledoux had been entrusted with the delicate work. The villa, which was square and of a height of twenty-five feet, had five windows in front and three on either side. The ground-floor was constructed of Saint-Leu stone, above which was a terrace surrounded by a balustrade. Eight steps led up to a portico supported by four fluted Ionic pillars, of which two were set in the wall. The peristyle was covered by a cupola, very finely worked inside. An admirable bas-relief by Lecomte ornamented the pediment, representing a paganly graceful Bacchanalian scene of a semi-circular group of children, playing with a goat amidst showers of roses.

Building was begun in December, 1770, and the villa was completed by January, 1772. The interior was divided into three salons and a vestibule attached to the dining-room. Every room of the little villa was decorated with the intertwining laurel, myrtle and roses of the chaser, Jacques Gouthière's bronzes. Their elegant affectation afforded an example of the high-water mark reached by the decorative arts of the age; from the lock of a door to the jamb of a mantelpiece, all was a marvel of taste, of exquisite design and of perfect execution.¹

The walls of the dining-room were faced with Lesbian

¹ Most of the Louveciennes bronzes were destroyed during the Revolution, but Gouthière's account gives a minutely detailed description of all the decoration. After having worked for the Countess the artist was employed by the Duke d'Aumont, and many of the things he made are now in public or private collections. In the Louvre there is "a set of fire-irons in gilt bronze, stag, boar and attributes of chase," and another in the shape of "a perfuming-pot and a pineapple," said to have belonged to Madame Du Barry. The Musée des Arts owns a door-knob with the monogram of the Countess.

marble. Large mirrors were framed by pilasters, whose bronze and gold Corinthian capitals broke the frieze of playing children that surrounded a ceiling by Boucher.¹ In the gilded caissons were the united arms of the Du Barrys and Jeanne de Vaubernier, while over the door was the portrait of Louis XV., wearing the ribbon of the Holy Ghost.

On the subject of the border for this portrait, which the King gave his mistress, Monsieur de Marigny, knowing her exacting demands, wrote to Pierre: "I am delighted that the Sieur Buteux has had the courage to execute the border for Madame Du Barry's portrait of His Majesty. As for the inscription, I hardly think it could be other than this: '*Given by His Majesty to Madame la Comtesse Du Barry in 1770.*' But if Madame Du Barry should demand some slight change in the form of this inscription, Buteux would have to take her orders, and act accordingly." And the Sieur Buteux repented many a time of his courage.

The character of the style known as Louis XVI. is summed up in the work of Gouthière, who conceived his most perfect masterpieces for the favourite.² He showed his designs to the Countess, who enjoyed going over them and afterwards criticising the various wax models and sand or plaster moulds. The artist's bills tell of fire-irons in the vestibule that matched the frieze running round the walls, of myrtle designs in the corners of the door, and of four small lustres of crystal and bronze placed before the mirrors. Golden torches held by four female figures, by Pajou and Lecomte, also illuminated the room.

There is a water-colour in the Louvre, by the younger Moreau, depicting with sparkling cleverness a supper-party at Louveciennes. The composition of this delightful sketch

¹ This Boucher ceiling has recently been placed in the Louvre.

² Madame Vigée Le Brun bears witness to the destruction of these marvellous works of art. "On coming to Louveciennes [in 1814] I hastened to visit the villa, which I had seen in all its beauty in September, 1789. All the furniture was gone and every one of the decorations of Madame Du Barry's time. Not only statues and busts had been taken, but also the bronzes of the mantelpieces, and the locks that were like goldsmith's work. In a word, the Revolution had ravaged here as everywhere else." *Souvenirs*, vol. iii., p. 298.

may strike one as cold, so minute are its details from the squared marble of the floor, to the gilded galleries for the musicians, which this evening were occupied by some of the guests of the Countess. Court etiquette was strictly followed in the serving of supper. Louis XV. presided, and the artist has cleverly caught the expression of haughty melancholy in his handsome Bourbon face. . . . To his right sits Madame Du Barry, in a very low-necked gown of white satin, with pearls about her throat, and her little head thrown proudly back, a pose that does not in the least detract from her charm and sweetness. Around the table great ladies are seated, and men glittering with orders; Richelieu, the brilliant wit; courteous, reserved d'Aiguillon; caustic Maupeou; gentle and lovable Chauvelin; and among many others the young Viscount Du Barry, blind as ever to the radiant galaxy of women, to all but the favourite, his faithfully beloved aunt.

The footmen move with difficulty among the curious crowd. Madame Du Barry's servants, in full dress livery of red velvet trimmed with gold lace, are aided in their duties by the Swiss Guards in blue uniform with white facings and edgings, three-cornered hats on their heads and swords by their side. Morin, the factotum, supervises their movements; Zamore is also there, a little black page in a pink costume, and Mirza, the white greyhound, that the Abbé Delille had given the Countess. A flowery epergne adorns the centre of the table, and gold candelabra are placed among the piled dishes, masterpieces by Salanave, the favourite's chief cook. Gold plate, chased by Roëttiers de la Tour,¹ alternates with Sèvres ware, patterned with tiny flowers encircling the monogram of the Countess, a design by Saint-Aubin.²

¹ See Madame Du Barry's accounts. The Roëttiers, father and son, had begun supplying the Countess in November, 1770; already by October 8, 1771, they had received the enormous sum of 227,328 livres.

² This service was replaced in 1773 by one composed of plates patterned with "Chinese pictures and miniatures." The artist's name is given in the accounts, year 1774, March 31: "Payed *Saint-*



A ROYAL SUPPER PARTY AT LOUYECIENNES
From a drawing by Moreau the younger, 1772

Thanks to its marvellous decoration, the square salon could easily be turned into a miniature theatre. Gouthière had made the bronze flowerwork over the mantelpiece and in the fire-irons, the garlands of the sconces and window embrasures, the bouquets of the sash-fastenings, locks and door-knobs. Over the two fireplaces trailed a frieze of entwined vine-leaves, and a similar pattern ornamented the panels and brackets. The fire-irons were embossed in gold ; on the locks, pierced with a design of hearts, was the monogram of the Countess, surrounded by an arabesque. Vines were wreathed round the window fastenings, whose handles were lyre-shaped and worked with flowers. The knobs, supports and hinges of the lattices were chased, gilded and double-gilded, and finally, the general scheme of decoration was repeated in the foliage of the sconces and candelabra.

Cagny had supplied the white and the gilded chairs, as also the twelve large armchairs, upholstered in yellow Indian silk, and embroidered by the Sieur Tripperet, embroiderer to the King, of Paris, rue Sainte-Anne, near the Nouvelles-Catholiques. The ottoman represented "landscapes with reapers" in six large medallions, and the two panels of the fire-screen were worked in the same style. And above the doors were paintings by Fragonard.

Three pieces of tapestry were ordered from the Gobelin Manufactory in November, 1772, for decorating the panels of the salon, but were not ready until 1775. They represented *Venus and Vulcan* after Boucher, *Pluto and Proserpina* after Vien, and the *Abduction of Europa* after a drawing by Pierre, principal painter to the King. All, and especially the first, were overladen with figures, which "made the expenses for working and material very costly owing to the variety of colours," wrote Cozette, the manager of the Royal

Aubin, designer, for designing plates—126 livres." The gold plate bears festoons of roses and the arms in relief. "Two dishes with platters and spoons for two services, platters and forks being very rich, ornamented with children holding garlands; on the four covers four different subjects. The crest embossed in bas-relief, the feet ornamented with rams' heads, trophies of flowers, and quivers, all finished with the greatest care . . . 24,000 livres."

Manufactory. At the end of his account, he had "the honour to represent that for similar pieces the late Madame de Pompadour gave him, in 1752, fifty louis for each piece, as a reward and honorarium." Before the fourth panel stood an altar in the classical style, of white marble, gold and silver, chased by Gouthière, and carved with figures by Feuillet and Metivier. On it was the white image of the favourite, the marble bust of her made by Pajou in 1773, that is now in the Louvre.

Louis XV. sometimes rested in this square salon after hunting at Marly. From the large open bay-windows the hill of Saint-Germain could be seen silhouetted in the dusk against the evening sky ; the last, melancholy soundings of the horn added to the indecisive charm of the hour, loved by the King for its poetry, its deep silence. Some years later, the Countess was to hear in this same room, not the bugles of the Royal Chase, but the sound of the cannonades from Paris.

Of the two smaller salons, the one on the right had a fireplace formed of little bronze and golden pillars wreathed in branches of myrtle, with roses on the frieze and cross-pieces ; there was more myrtle decoration on the doors and windows, whose fastenings and locks bore Madame Du Barry's monogram in a coronet of roses. Two statuettes, carved by Vassé, stood on pedestals, one an *Amor*, the other a *Thalia* holding her mask. Above the doors Drouais had painted four children, which Diderot much admired. "He has given such vivacity and clearness to their eyes," he wrote, "that they seem to look and smile at you, even from quite close."

Vien painted four pictures for this salon, though Madame Du Barry had at first given Fragonard the task of decorating it ; in 1771 she asked the latter for the paintings, whose subject she herself devised. They represented the purest and sweetest of idylls played in a setting of blue-tinted parks, among rosebushes : *The rendezvous*, *The courtship*, *The love-letters*, and *The lover crowned*. The composition is tinged with melancholy, but such a feeling vanishes on seeing, on a little pedestal, wingéd Eros, sceptical and mocking,

the very incarnation of the age. The series is Fragonard's masterpiece, and is undoubtedly the finest example of this kind of eighteenth century decorative art.¹ "The exquisite pictures, though so suitable to Louveciennes, the home of art, did not adorn the white villa of the gardens. Certainly not because they did not please the Countess ; her sure taste . . . made her too good a judge of the value of paintings for that ; but her mania for criticising and minutely instructing the artists who worked for her, must have wearied Fragonard."² The latter therefore kept his pictures, and received eighteen thousand livres from the favourite. Vien, "the disciple of the Greeks," was given the work instead, and on the same subject as Fragonard, namely, on *The progress of love in the hearts of young girls*. But the grace, the luminous quality were gone, and his cold classic figures, conventionally nude, already foreshadowed the school of David.

The third salon was all mirrors, with a ceiling by Briard on the subject of *Rural pastimes*, and the motto *Ruris amor*. Often the long, glass panels reflected in contrast the affected scenes of Court-life ; great ladies seated in armchairs, and courtiers gallantly bending over them ; pretty coquetry and fan-concealed smiles ; while the black page and Mirza, the greyhound, played among the trains of brocaded gowns.

While the villa was being completed in the gardens, the château was being altered to suit the wishes of the Countess. From the end of her exile, after the death of Louis XV., until the day of her sentence, Madame Du Barry lived nowhere else. The building dates from the time of Louis XIV., who had it erected for the Baron de Ville, a gentleman of Liège and the constructor of the engine at Marly. The Duke de Luynes speaks in his memoirs of the entertainments given at Louveciennes in 1737, when it belonged to Mademoiselle de Clermont, the legitimised daughter of Mademoiselle de Nantes and the Great King. "Life there is charming," he wrote, "and the house is very pretty." There the Duke de

¹ The four pictures belonged to the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan.

² P. de Nolhac, *J.-H. Fragonard*, p. 64.

Penthièvre, the heir to the Countess de Toulouse, witnessed the death, in 1768, of the Prince de Lamballe, the last of his five sons. He parted with his life-interest in the estate, and Louis XV. granted it to his mistress on July 26, 1769.

The little château was in such a bad condition that the favourite asked for repairs to be executed, and also for additions, such as halls for the menservants, rooms for the women, baths, offices and an orangery. As a Crown domain was in question, the work was carried out under the supervision of Gabriel, superintendent of the Office of Works.

The ceiling of the vestibule was ornamented with a frieze of playing children. The dining-room was panelled with woodwork, carved with attributes of the chase and rural trophies, which was continued on the walls of the salon. The favourite's own apartment was on the first floor, as also that of the King, which was later occupied by the Duke de Cossé-Brissac. Adjoining the orangery was the white and gold chapel, where the marriages of the domestics and the baptisms of their children were celebrated. A friar of Saint-Germain officiated every Sunday. There is in Madame Du Barry's accounts a list of golden monstrances, chalices and vases to be used for divine service.

On the death of Louis XV., Montvallier, steward to the Countess, had all the furniture and precious articles of her rooms at Versailles moved to Louveciennes,¹ whose artistic treasures increased from year to year. Not that the château was filled with the indiscriminate profusion of a financier's galleries; everything was choice, perfect, rare. The art of the period was summed up in the harmonious whole, in which each thing stood out and received its proper value. Among the rich and glorious harvest of the age, there were works whose delicate grace and moving truth appealed especially to the soul of their sensitive young owner. Her time of favour was one of the most charming periods of painting in the 18th century, that knew so many charming

¹ On February 17, 1777, some of Madame Du Barry's pictures were sold by auction, among them the *Prayer to Love*, by Greuze. See Goncourt, *La Du Barry*, p. 205.

periods. From Watteau to Fragonard many masters had flourished, and their canvases, though less appreciated, were still sometimes to be seen, framed in gold; but in general the young generation of painters triumphed by reason of their talent and vigour.

In the château of Louveciennes we again find Fragonard, in the four pictures over the doors of the dining-room; *The Graces*, *Love setting the world on fire*, *Venus and Love*, and finally *Night*. He was, no doubt, her favourite, this artist who added Watteau's dreaminess, Chardin's intimacy and Boucher's sensuousness, to all the wit and voluptuousness of his time. The new ideals of a return to nature prevailed in the decoration of her walls. There was the picture of a ruin by Hubert Robert, a seascape by Vernet. Greuze in sentimental mood was represented by *The Broken Pitcher*, "a symbol," wrote a critic, "of the far more precious possession the girl has lost. The flowers she holds in her apron express with no less ingenuity the trifling, worthless compensation she has received. Her face is full of the naïve grief that this first blow inspires in every virtuous person. As for the execution, it is excellent; the flesh tones have the firmness of a robust peasant girl, in whose plump arms the quick blood flows."

Framed in trophies, wreathed in myrtle and roses, the image of the Countess smiled from the walls, whether as the Flora, Muse or elegant cavalier of Drouais' portraits, or as represented later in the series by Madame Vigée Le Brun. The painter whom the favourite usually commissioned for this work is much rather the follower of Nattier than of Latour, but the superficial graces of his brush, his delicate colouring and refined affectation pleased Madame Du Barry. As we have seen, he exhibited every year a portrait of her in the Salon of the Louvre. His wife and pupils assisted him in making the numerous copies she required.

One of the most engaging representations of the favourite was painted in 1771 by J.-B.-A. Gauthier-Dagoty, the elder son, who afterwards engraved it both in black-and-white and in colour. He shows us the young woman seated in

front of her toilet table, while Zamore is handing her coffee.¹ She is very fair in her large white morning-gown, that is open to show her rose petticoat. But how she has rouged, she who as a rule used so little ! There are lace ruffles on her wrists, and in her hands she holds a silver cup affectedly poised. Her hair is dressed in curls, and falls in three heavy ringlets, that by some astonishing optical prodigy are reflected in the glass on the draped table. In her large blue eyes, shaded by long, fringed lashes, is an expression of gentle melancholy, but her mouth is as childishly mischievous as ever.

Greuze, too, painted the favourite, but as a Bacchante. The *Anecdotes* relate how, being dissatisfied with her portrait as a Muse, " she wished the Sieur Greuze to undertake a work in the same style." Monseigneur de Grimaldi, the Bishop of Noyons, wrote to his friend Desfriches on April 6, 1772 : " I have been to Greuze, who, after having shown me an oval portrait of Madame Du Barry, which those who know the original assure me is exactly like, described all its beauties to me in detail, and I have indeed found it very fine." This is, no doubt, the unfinished picture, which passed into the possession of the State according to the sale inventory made at Louveciennes in 1793. It is now only known in an indifferent contemporary engraving. The favourite's bosom is uncovered and supported by a corselet of tigerskin ; she is crowned with vine-leaves, and her hair floats in wild disorder over her shoulders ; in her hand she holds the thyrsis, and her leering expression is one that Greuze could never have given her.

Drouais also painted for the Countess her beloved niece Betzy, embracing a cat ; Betzy playing on the triangle ; Mademoiselle Luxembourg crowning the greyhound Mirza ; Zamore and a little son of the porter at Louveciennes ; and she further owned a portrait of Marie Antoinette by the

¹ This picture was long thought to be a copy of a Drouais, by De Creuse. In Louis Philippe's time it was enlarged by the latter painter, and the figure of Zamore was completed. It is in the Versailles Museum.

same artist. Once the Office of Works happened to have to refer to this original in order to enable Duplessis to make more pictures of the Princess. In November, 1771, Monsieur de Marigny was made aware of the fact that "Monsieur Jaurat had no portrait of the Dauphine. Of the two which existed one belonged to Madame Du Barry, the other was in Vienna. . . . Madame Du Barry's picture would have to be borrowed, which could be arranged by Monsieur Pierre, if the Director-General thought suitable."

Madame Du Barry's picture gallery included many other works, which she had commissioned or which had been bought in her name. De La Borde brought her paintings from Italy; the Marquis d'Arcambal acquired for her on one single occasion several valuable pictures, and she procured some beautiful ones at the Choiseul sale. She paid twenty thousand livres for the famous Charles I. of Van Dyck, said to have belonged to Crozat de Thiers. "A family portrait," she modestly called it; and, indeed, the Du Barrys were connected with the Stuarts through the Barrymores.¹

However sure she felt of her artistic knowledge, she yet thought right to engage an expert, Monsieur Boileau, to examine her acquisitions. She used to make fun of amateurs who allowed themselves to be duped by dealers; for instance, she wrote to "her poet," the Abbé Delille, in 1782: "You must be perfectly acquainted with the pictures of Albane,

¹ This is the Van Dyck at the Louvre. The libellers have related how the Countess bought the picture at the Crozat sale, in order to display it in her rooms at Versailles, and how she afterwards showed it every day to the King, threatening him with the fate of King Charles should he give way to the Parliaments. This story shows complete ignorance of the despotic and haughty character of Louis XV. Besides, the sale of the Crozat collection did not take place until the end of 1771, after the Parliaments had fallen. Michélet, who used the anecdote with such telling harshness, cannot have known this detail. Another fact against the plausibility of the story is that the picture is too large ever to have been brought into the favourite's low-ceiled, gabled rooms. Nor is it catalogued in the collection of the Baron de Thiers, and no doubt never belonged to him. Where Madame Du Barry acquired it is not known, and she sold it during the reign of Louis XVI.

since you use his colours in your charming works ; but the Duke asserts that you have laughingly imagined an association of the name of Poussin with the picture you were so proud of having acquired so cheaply, which is just as if one were to inscribe the name of Delille on the gardens of Le Nôtre in order to double their price." ¹

The inventories of the Revolutionary period point to the existence of a large number of pictures at Louveciennes. Vien is mentioned as the painter not only of the four panels in the villa, but also of four genre pictures : *The woman selling loves*, commissioned for the Countess by the Duke de Cossé-Brissac, *Love escapes*, a pendant to the former, and two nymphs, one gathering roses, the other plucking the strings of a lyre. She had a pastoral scene by Boucher, a bacchanal by Pierre, a rural scene by Cassanova, a seascape by Vernet, " ruins, among which sacrifice is made to Venus " by Hubert Robert. The Dutch and Flemish schools were represented by an interior by Van Ostade, a tavern by Teniers, a landscape by Jan Wynants, and a nude woman by Cornelis van Poelenbourg, modestly concealed under " a curtain of green taffetas."

Of historical pictures she owned four large compositions that the King had given her, having taken them from the old gallery at Choisy. Such representations were again coming into fashion, and their subjects seem very severe, namely : *Augustus closing the Temple of Janus*, by Carle Vanloo, *The Emperor Trajan receiving a woman's petition*, by Hallé, *Marcus Aurelius having food distributed to the people*, by Vien. . . . How far they are from the licentious paintings attributed to her collection !

The Countess had collected numerous engravings and drawings ; among them she especially prized the drawing of the Bordeaux ship that bore her name, and Moreau's water-colour of the supper-party at Louveciennes, as remembrances of the past. Then there were miniatures, which at that time were so much sought after for the lids of caskets and snuffboxes, but which were sometimes

¹ Delille's poem, *Les Jardins*, had just been published.

complete in themselves, framed in a circle of gems or chased gold. The favourite possessed a portrait of Louis XIV. by Petitot, "another of the late Monsieur de France, both in enamel, as also a portrait of a woman, again by Petitot ;" "a Louis XV. painted by Massé, surrounded by a gold laurel-leaf border ; another Louis XV. by the same painter, but smaller, in a gold medallion ; a Louis XV. as a Carmelite ; a Louis XV. in a laboratory ;" and two gold-mounted tortoiseshell boxes with the portraits of Marie Antoinette and a nun, no doubt the Abbess of Pont-aux-Dames.

Later the Countess owned portraits in enamel of de Brissac, his grandmother, daughter and grandson.¹ Of special note among these dainty masterpieces was a miniature of herself by Lawreince, delicately drawn, and coloured in finely blended mauves and greys. Her youthful beauty glows vividly in the setting of the jewelled frame ; she wears her heavy locks powdered white and confined with a lilac ribbon, a straw hat and grey feather, and a simple unadorned corsage, following the lines of her slender form. The work is happier in its treatment than that of Hall executed in 1773. The Swedish miniature painter had portrayed Madame Du Barry for Gustavus III., who already possessed one of Drouais' portraits.

The painting of the period was repeated in Sèvres ware of every shape, such as large urns, vases and flower-stands, in Royal blue, turquoise blue or pale blue, which last colour the Countess preferred.² The furniture was medallioned

¹ See the declaration made by Madame Du Barry on the day of her execution, a document published by Vatel, from which it may be seen that she still possessed innumerable engraved stones set in rings ; "a gold-mounted tortoiseshell box with a very beautiful white stone finely engraved with the portraits of Brissac and the declarer" ; gold medals struck on the occasions of various events, among them some "commemorating the marriages of the ci-devant Princes."

² In accordance with the preferences of her day, Madame Du Barry also possessed Chinese, Japanese and Persian vases, inkhorns or grotesques. Every year during her favour, her numerous purchases of Sèvres were included in the Exhibition of porcelain in the King's

in the same ware,¹ matching the clear porcelain of all these precious things.

The sculptors of France, even more than her painters, are the glory of the eighteenth century, and are as precious witnesses to its traditions. Contemporary sculpture was brilliantly represented at Louveciennes, while some master-pieces of the past also revealed the spirit and delicately toned grace, so peculiar to the age.

Before the Countess was admitted to the Court in the early days of 1769, Lemoine carved the bust of the favourite in marble, a bust of seductive charm, that was reproduced by Sèvres, and of which only one copy is known to us. It seems to have inspired Pajou in his marvellous work of 1773 representing the favourite, which she placed in her villa in the gardens of Louveciennes. J.-J. Cafféri, with as much genius, and more sprightly vivacity, also made an image of her ladyship, a terracotta that we have discovered.² Yet another bust, smaller than lifesize and of supreme perfection, attributed to Houdon, represents the Countess, this time wearing a wreath of roses.

Besides the four groups of women by Lecomte and Pajou, the two statuettes by Vien and the busts of its mistress already referred to, Louveciennes boasted other sculptures. A gallery full of precious things, that Madame Le Brun was one day to admire, was no doubt the home of the porphyry

salon. In her gardens and peristyles were vases of marble and porphyry which were kept by the State, when the inventory of the Château of Louveciennes was made.

¹ When the Countess was exiled from Versailles her furniture was moved to Louveciennes. The little Château already included among its possessions two inlaid chests-of-drawers, by J.-F. Leleu, with lozenges inlaid with fleur-de-lys, one of which is now at the Petit Trianon. There was also an inlaid and painted writing-table signed Pasquin.

² The Goncourts are strangely mistaken in asserting Madame Du Barry to be the original of the young "dancer" of the Versailles Library, in whose sly face there is not one of the favourite's features. Moreover, she is quite a young girl, while at the date on the pedestal the favourite was twenty-eight years old. We think we have found Cafféri's bust in the Brussels Museum, in a terracotta falsely attributed to Pajou.



MADAME DU BARRY
Bust in terra cotta by J. J. Caffieri

vases, bought by de Brissac, then Duke de Cossé, for his friend. In the living-rooms the image of the King was to be seen in a marble by Pajou, in a bronze bust by Lemoine, and again in a bronze group, by the same artist, of Louis XV. carried aloft by three warriors. On pedestals stood statuettes copied from the antique; an Apollo Belvedere and a Venus Callipyge, brought from Rome at great expense; an *Abduction of Helen*, a Vestal nursing the sacred fire and attended by two children; further there were two little pieces by Boizot, a nymph fleeing from the darts of Love and Love preparing to let fly an arrow at her, the original of Falconet's masterpiece, the *Woman Bathing*, and the group of *Love and Friendship*, thought to be by Lemoine, which in reality the Countess commissioned Caffiéri to make.¹

There was statuary in the park, too, gleaming white through the foliage of its arbours, or reflected in the waters of its fountains. The lines of the little château were continued in the symmetrical arrangement of the garden, which was laid out in the French style, with level lawns, triangles of rose-beds, wheels of myrtle, and solid rectangular groves of laurel, the whole forming one of those series of geometrical problems in proportion solved in diagrams made of flowers, that Horace Walpole made such fun of, never having understood them. By the threshold of the little villa were two statues of women bathing by Allegrain, so "soft in execution" and "so ingenious in attitude," that one could not but admire them. The *Venus* was to have been placed at Choisy, but Louis XV. presented it to his mistress. Monsieur de Marigny wrote on April 12, 1772: "Monsieur

¹ "We all four assembled on Saturday, the 29th July last, at seven o'clock in the evening, in M. Caffiéri's studio, and there, after having minutely examined his work, a group of Love and Friendship, and taking into account the expense to which he has been put . . . we have valued the above work at a sum of three thousand six hundred livres, for which sum the Sieur Caffiéri is bound to deliver the said model in plaster to Madame la Comtesse. . . . Lemoine, G. Coustou, A. Pajou, Pigalle." The four sculptors also examined the block of marble bought by Caffiéri for the model. But neither plaster nor marble group has been found.

Pierre is to tell Monsieur Allegrain, sculptor to the King, to deliver to Madame Du Barry, for her gardens at Louveciennes, the figure of Venus in marble, which he has executed for the King, and which was committed to his keeping." The companion figure of *Diana surprised by Actaeon* was only delivered in 1775. The artist was criticised for having given the huntress the disturbing beauty of Cytherea, but the charming statue aimed at reproducing the features and the divine fascination of the favourite. Further off, near a rose-bed, were three figures by Vassé; another Venus, a Cupid and a "seated Minerva, leaning on her shield."¹ Beyond the arbour could be seen the gracious form of a nymph by Coysevox, and looking towards the woods of Marly was a sphinx in terracotta. Large marble vases ornamented the approach to the château and the peristyle of the villa, or were outlined in their graceful curves against a background of dark woods.

The admirable arrangement of the gardens of Louveciennes in the French style was to yield by degrees to the growing taste for English ways. Increased sensibility induced people to dream only of a return to nature, of free and picturesque landscapes; and, as if by accident, Dutch windmills, Chinese pagodas and Gothic ruins were found at the bends of the winding alleys. But Madame Du Barry was satisfied with less, though after 1781 she altered the arrangement of her lower gardens on the recommendation of Monsieur d'Angiviller, and "upset" them altogether in order to have them laid out in the English style.

When the new buildings at Louveciennes were finished, the Countess bought in 1772 the Binet villa situated in the Avenue de Paris at Versailles. A balustrade ran round the flat Roman roof, which was ornamented with statues and terracotta vases. In front of the house stretched a long avenue of limes. She had a building erected for her household and her stables on some ground adjacent to the estate. She commissioned Ledoux with the design, but only the

¹ Vassé's group, *Venus teaching Love how to draw his Bow*, was valued at 14,000 livres.

monumental entrance is of interest. On the stone pediment were two female figures by Lecomte, supporting the arms of the Countess.¹ One was a Flora, half nude and possibly a likeness of Madame Du Barry, the other a Minerva robed in the classical style.

This was the villa where she gave her entertainments in honour of the Duke d'Aiguillon in 1773. All the actors, musicians and dancers were proud to appear at the reception, and indeed she was their sovereign dictator to whom they brought all their petitions, who supported their interests, paid their debts and settled their disputes.

In the Royal Household, the administration of the Privy Purse and of the Lord Chamberlain's and Lord Steward's Departments was attached to the Office of Works. The Privy Purse was controlled by the four First Lords in Waiting, who served in rotation, each for one year; above them was the favourite, below them the Master of the Ceremonies, on whom, of course, fell all the work and responsibility.

From the very beginning of her power the Countess gave her attention to the finances of the Privy Purse, which were in a deplorable condition. "She understood very well all that I told her," wrote Papillon de La Ferté in his diary, "and has promised me to speak to the Minister." She tried first of all to do away with the tax on the poor, although the budget was still further burdened with the enormous sums of money laid out on the weddings of the Dauphin, the Count de Provence and the Count d'Artois.

During these five years she also decided on the plays to be acted at Versailles and Fontainebleau; and whatever may have been said to the contrary, her choice was always guided by good taste and a knowledge of the theatre. Whether "on duty" or not, the Marshal de Richelieu and the Duke de Duras retained their positions as directors of the Comédie Italienne and the Comédie Française respectively, but understood very little of their difficult duties. When

¹ On the disgrace of the favourite, her arms were replaced by those of the Count de Provence; in 1793, the fleur-de-lys were destroyed. The gateway now forms the entrance to barracks.

La Ferté wished to restore peace he turned to Madame Du Barry for help. "These gentlemen," he wrote, "never want to get to the bottom of things, but allow themselves to be guided by intriguers, especially women." Richelieu's protégé was Mademoiselle Dubois, and Duras' was Madame Vestris, and only these two ladies were at all in favour. But at least the Marshal took care of the débutantes, particularly when they were pretty, like the Demoiselle Colombe, whom painters and sculptors so often represented caressing the gentle birds whose name she so appropriately bore. "To conciliate all these gentlemen and all these ladies is indeed work for a diplomat," complained La Ferté. "I went to the Marshal to give him an account of all the difficulties, and found him with the Demoiselle Colombe, a débutante at the Italienne. He is so overcome by her supposed talent that he even went so far as to ask her, before me, to rehearse one of her parts to him. Is it astonishing that a Master of the Ceremonies should be able to do so little for the success of the plays, when a great lord, and one of Monsieur de Richelieu's age too, descends to having a débutante rehearse her parts before him?" Only the Countess could induce her old friend to see reason, and she, too, had favourites herself in Mademoiselle Dumesnil and the young Raucourt, who astounded Paris by her six months of virtue. Lekain, the tragedian whom Voltaire admired, enjoyed the patronage of the mistress, from whom he received some beautiful theatrical costumes in "the Greek and Roman styles." The comedians Molé and Prévillé also shared her bounty.

In spite of the number of dramatic authors in France, from great lords such as the Duke de Nivernais and the Duke de La Vallière down to professional writers, such as La Borde and Marmontel, the drama was passing through a literary crisis. Moreover, the Opéra Comique, after it left the booths of the fair and joined the Comédie Italienne, monopolised public favour with inimitable Caillot, with Clairval and Laruelle, with Mesdames Dugazon and Colombe, the celebrated interpreters of eighteenth century music.

The Comédie Française was jealous of their success, and reasonably so, for their company was unrivalled in all Europe. They still played at the Tuileries, while the new theatre was being built, to whose construction Madame Du Barry, the Lords in Waiting, and the Royal Architects gave their united attention. The favourite received builders and read through memoranda, which were discussed in many a conference held in her rooms. She wanted the building to add to the beauty of Paris if the expense were not too great. When the plans were first projected in December, 1771, she feared the choice would fall on an inefficient architect, and demanded that all those interested should assemble in her rooms. "The Duke de Duras went to Madame Du Barry's," wrote Papillon de La Ferté, "as well as myself and the company of the Comédie Française. The plans brought by the Sieur Peyre were lengthily examined and discussed." De Wailly and Peyre finally won the day over their competitors, and the Comédie Française was built on the site of the present Odéon, though it was not finished until 1782.

The chief debt of the company to the favourite was their school of Drama, which was created under her auspices, and became later the Conservatoire. Sophie Arnould, the well-known actress, did not know how truly she spoke, when she ironically said on the death of Louis XV. and the exile of his mistress: "We have lost both father and mother!"

CHAPTER VI

IN DISGRACE

Imprisoned in the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames—In Exile at the Château of Saint-Vrain—Return to Louveciennes—Visit of the Emperor Joseph II.—The Duke Hercule-Timoléon de Cossé-Brissac—Henry Seymour—The Queen's Necklace—Madame Du Barry and her Friends—Madame Le Brun at Louveciennes.

LOUIS was dead, and to Madame Du Barry fell the lot of the exile ; well-guarded, she was taken from Rueil at dusk in order to avoid scandal, and after travelling twenty leagues, arrived at the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames in the district of Brie. The Abbey was not a convent pure and simple, a shelter open to all, but a State prison under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant of Police, where the King sent such women as were struck like the Countess by a *lettre de cachet*. All the way she wept with the despair and abandonment of a child, bemoaning her heavy burden of grief. As she crossed the threshold of the ruined monastery and saw its dark high walls, she exclaimed : “ Oh, how gloomy ! and they have sent me here ! ”

The stern and haughty Abbess, Madame de la Roche-Fontenilles, awaited the prisoner in her parlour, surrounded by her nuns. At first the latter dared not look the Countess in the face. They examined her in a mirror, and were astonished to see, not the “ demon features ” they had feared, but a most beautiful woman bathed in tears.¹ There were thirty nuns and twenty lay-sisters, all of whom wore the white robe and wimple of the Bernardines that had once been the attire of the former pupil at Sainte-Aure.

¹ These traditions were handed down by Mademoiselle de la Neuville, Madame Du Barry's niece ; they are quoted by Vatel.

The Countess was taken to the most secluded part of the convent and kept there in absolute secrecy. On the pretext of political necessity, her confinement was for some time of the strictest. Marie Antoinette wrote to her mother : " The creature has been taken to a convent, and all who bear her scandalous name have been driven from Court." The Empress thought these expressions rather too violent, and felt it her duty to remind the young Queen of the need for Christian charity. " I hope nothing further will be said of the unfortunate Barry, for whom I have never pleaded except in so far as respect towards your sovereign and father required. I hope to hear her name only once more, when I learn that the King has treated her with generosity, confining her and her husband at a distance from Court, and softening her fate in accordance with the dictates of humanity as far as circumstances allow."¹ But during these first few days no one besides Maria Theresa felt any pity for " the poor Barry."

The exile of the favourite had moreover been decreed by Louis XV. himself on his deathbed, at the instance of the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon. That he did so has been verified from the register of the King's commands, which bore the following for the date of May 9, 1774 :

Note by the Minister.

The Count Du Barry to be conducted to the château of Vincennes.

The Countess Du Barry to be conducted to the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames.²

At the first alarm the Roué fled to Holland. The Countess might have taken refuge with the Prince des Deux-Ponts,

¹ Maria Theresa wrote on the same day to Mercy : " I have thought necessary to write something about the poor Barry. She wrote to me about her on the 7th, with vehemence, speaking of her as the creature. The unfortunate woman is more to be pitied than we ; she has lost all, and has no consolation, nor can she seek it in religion, the one efficacious cure for such troubles."

² This register was lost on the occasion of the fire at the Prefecture of Police in 1871, but not before Vatel had found and verified the above note.

who made her an offer of protection, which she however declined. Mademoiselle Chon left for Toulouse after her brother's disappearance. "The coopers are at their wits' ends, for all the barrels are running," wrote some wit. Two *lettres de cachets* issued on May 12 by the Duke de la Vrillière, forbade the Viscount and the Viscountess Du Barry to appear at Court, but the young Viscountess was allowed to visit her aunt at Pont-aux-Dames.¹ The Marquis Du Barry and his wife, on the other hand, escaped disgrace by asking for and obtaining permission by letters patent of July 26, 1774, to assume the name and arms of Conty d'Hargicourt, an uncle of the Marquise.

Meanwhile the Countess in her convent attracted the sisters more and more by her gentle charm, and she thus became the friend of Henriette-Catherine de Courcelles, Marguerite Chouard de Cornillon, Louise du Bois de Villarcieux, of the prioress, sister Thérèse Esprit, and of Gabrielle de la Roche-Fontenilles herself, the austere mother superior of the Royal Abbey. The life of prayer that Madame Du Barry led amid these calm, affectionate surroundings softened her regrets and soothed her sorrow. The misfortunes that befell her family, now scattered far and wide, were not the only ones of which she heard. Many others also suffered, and one after the other d'Aiguillon, Terray and Maupeou were disgraced.

But the Duke's successor in the Ministry turned out to be his uncle, witty Maurepas, whom "the little bourgeoisie" had banished, and who was now recalled after long years of

¹ By some singular confusion the Goncourts have published Vrillière's letter to the Viscountess Du Barry as though it were the one the Countess had received. The document itself is sufficient to prove to the reader the mistake they have made :

"Madame la Vicomtesse Du Barry,

I hope, Madame, you will not doubt my grief at having to inform you that you are forbidden to appear at Court ; but I am obliged to carry out the King's orders. . . .

At the same time His Majesty is quite willing to allow you to visit your aunt at the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames, and I shall therefore write to the Abbess in order that you may experience no difficulty in doing so. . . ."

exile. At Versailles he occupied a part of the favourite's former apartments, the suite of little gilded rooms under the gables. From him no doubt help would come. Madame Du Barry had for a moment feared the return of Choiseul to power, but Marie Antoinette was not able to overcome the aversion of Louis XVI. for the ex-minister. While yet a child he had been told (perhaps by La Vauguyon) that the Duke had prematurely ended the life of the Dauphin, his father, by means of poison, and the impression this made on his mind was never obliterated. Thus the Countess had some reason to hope she would soon be set free, for her still faithful friends kept her informed of the prospects of liberation. As always, the most devoted of her supporters were to be found among the humblest. An honest fellow called Desfontaines,¹ whom she had engaged as librarian, wrote to the prisoner ten days after her arrest :

I have been to pay my respects to your mother, whom I found very sad, and who begs you to let her have news of you as often as possible. She is very anxious to go to Pont-aux-Dames. . . . I spent an hour with Monsieur de La Borde, whose grief has by no means lessened his devotion to you. He assured me he would give proofs of it as soon as he is in a position to do so, and from what he said to me, I believe he will succeed. . . . He begs Madame to be so kind as to keep entirely to herself the letters he has had the honour of addressing her. . . .

As soon as Madame has decided with Monsieur d'Auteuil as to our stay at Rueil, I shall go to Louveciennes and make an inventory of the books, which will spoil if left shut up as they are now. . . . I shall add to them two or three hundred volumes, which are in the Viscount's care, after which I await Madame's further orders as to the things she desires me to do ; I am ready to go anywhere she wishes, and shall be happy wherever I may be of use to her. . . . I have sufficient experience of all the branches of my work to undertake any you may think necessary, and my desire to be of use to you will make me capable of doing all.

¹ According to Vatel this Desfontaines may have been the author of the *Cinquantaine*, the *Fête de Village*, *Isménor*, etc.

The first to receive permission to visit Madame Du Barry was her lawyer, Maître Le Pot d'Autueil. Her creditors had hastened to present their bills as soon as they heard of the death of Louis XV., and she had to think of some means of paying off her debts, as well as of paying the wages of her servants, whom she wished to retain. As she did not know whether she would be able to count on the income she had hitherto enjoyed, whether she would be allowed to keep Louveciennes, the revenue from the Nantes shops and from the Hôtel de Ville, all of which the late King had given her, she decided to sell some of her jewels, pictures and furniture.

Very soon three others were allowed to enter the Abbey in order to deal with Madame Du Barry's affairs. They were Montvallier, her steward, and Paymaster of Paris, Buffault, formerly a merchant, now a money-lender, and finally Aubert, the Crown jeweller. The latter was given orders to sell some of her finest sets of jewels to the best advantage.

Pont-aux-Dames, *September 22, 1774.*

I approve and authorise the Sieur Aubert, whom I have empowered so to do, to conclude the sale of my set of finely mounted diamonds, composed of the corsage, the shoulder-knots, etc., for the sum of 450,000 livres, payable at the rate of 50,000 every six months.

I further authorise and empower him as above to conclude the sale of my set of rubies and diamonds . . . the said set for the sum of 150,000 livres. . . . I do not doubt the Sieur Aubert will do his best in my interests, and obtain the greatest profit possible on the articles that I have entrusted to him.¹

But her interests were not looked after, for her presence at the sales would have been necessary. She tried to recover her independence on the pretext of ill-health, and wrote to the Duke de La Vrillière, who adroitly put off her request by a courteous note.² The Abbess in her turn wrote on

¹ Aubert sold the diamond set for 390,000 livres, and began the payments of 50,000 livres from January 1, 1775.

² This note is of August 6, 1774. The Minister assures Madame Du Barry of his real interest "at all times," and the correspondence quoted by the Marquis of Ségur proves he was sincere in his desire to serve her.

behalf of the captive, and this time the letter reached Louis XVI., through the support of the faithful Duchess d'Aiguillon. "My sister (Madame de Maurepas), " La Vrillière wrote to her, "sent me the letter of the Abbess of Pont-aux-Dames, and as I had nothing of greater importance to do this morning, I took it to the King. He read it, and after having listened to all I said to persuade him to restore her liberty to Madame Du Barry, he gave me back the letter of the Abbess. . . . Be assured that I shall do all in my power to obtain what you desire." Somewhat later the King replied to a direct request from Monsieur de Maurepas with "a very dry *no*," and the right to enter the convent continued to be forbidden to every unauthorised visitor.

Such a vigorous prohibition leaves no shadow of foundation for the pamphleteers' stories of Madame Du Barry's gay and even libertine existence in her saintly retreat. Everything points to her having conducted herself irreproachably at Pont-aux-Dames. Indeed it is impossible to believe that Madame de la Roche-Fontenilles should have taken her under her protection and loved her sincerely for twenty years, if she had not inspired some respect by her modest demeanour and attention to monastic regulations. She never left the Abbey, but used to walk in its large park, or sit and read, or dream, or sometimes weep, by the fountain which bears her name, and was probably built for her.¹ She joined the nuns at mass and divine service; she liked the little choir-boy, "who had a pretty face," and enjoyed showing him kindness.

The sisters surrounded her with tender care, and afterwards, when she was free once more, she came more than once to rest in their pious retreat. For a long time the Countess was remembered in the neighbourhood for her generosity and "her very lovable smile." A letter from the Duke de Brissac was one day to speak of her friends at Pont. "They love you for yourself," he gallantly wrote,

¹ There is no reason to believe, as the Goncourts have stated, that she had a wing added to the Abbey by her architect Ledoux.

"because they know you well, and those who do so can with difficulty deny the tribute due to the goodness of heart, beauty, sweetness and lovable and perfectly equable temper, that constitute the charm of close companionship."

In the little vaulted chapel of the Abbey, during the early days of her imprisonment, she took part in the mass that was celebrated in all the churches of France for the repose of the soul of the dead King. As she stood there, dressed in deep mourning, listening to the benediction pronounced on Louis the Well Beloved by the almoner of the Abbey, the sisters saw with profound emotion that the tears were streaming down her face.

But the days began to weigh heavily on her volatile spirit ; she was not made to bear long-drawn pain, and easily resigned after her hard trials, she forgot as such women do forget. She dreamt of a new life, of other loves, in a word, of happiness again. The Prince de Ligne, who was still her friend, is supposed to have ventured to lay in the hands of Marie Antoinette herself a letter from the captive, "asking him to arrange her affairs, which her thoughtless disinterestedness had brought to a very bad state after the King's death."¹ Nor was the intervention of the Prince said to have been ineffectual in advancing the cause of the prisoner. As, further, she did not offend in any way, the restrictions on her movements gradually became less severe. On May 24, 1775, a gazette stated that "Madame Du Barry has been given permission to leave the Abbey ; she goes for walks in the neighbourhood, but returns to the convent at night. Rumour says she is buying an estate."² Thus was her early liberation announced.

¹ The Prince relates in his memoirs that Louis XVI. said to him, on the subject of this letter : "What a fine mission you have undertaken !" to which "I replied that no one else would have dared to do it." The newsmongers have told how the Prince was said to have climbed the convent walls in order to console the Countess.

² A letter from Monsieur de La Vrillière to Madame d'Aiguillon, quoted by Monsieur de Ségur, shows the general feeling of the Court at her liberation. "Madame Adelaide, to whom I spoke of it, said she would not interfere, but that if the King referred to it, she would say he had done well in setting her free. Everyone else thinks so too."

In the following month she regained her liberty, but was compelled to keep at a distance of not less than ten leagues from the Court and the capital. The estate of Saint-Vrain, which she knew as having belonged to the second son of Madame de la Garde, complied with these conditions, and she bought it. The château was situated near Corbeil and Arpajon in the Hurepoix plain. It was surrounded by a moat with a drawbridge, and in the large park was a fine stretch of ornamental water. The deed of purchase was signed at Pont-aux-Dames on April 9, 1775. The proprietor, Jacques Sauvage, Secretary to the King, asked two hundred thousand livres in cash, which were advanced by the Duke d'Aiguillon, and fifteen thousand livres for the furniture.

Madame Du Barry summoned her former household to Saint-Vrain, and she was soon joined by her nieces and sister-in-law. She made up for the privations she had endured in exile by inviting the neighbouring families to one entertainment after another, which are still remembered in the district. Nor is her charity forgotten; "she had bread and meat and wood distributed; she succoured all who were in distress, or rather she saw to it that there were no longer any people in distress. Often she allowed the villagers to dance in her park." ¹

Had it not been for the visits of a few beloved friends, however, the Countess would sometimes have felt life very dreary in her vast domain. The Duke de Cossé-Brissac, whom she had known intimately at Versailles, was still her faithful and tender admirer. So too Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who remained at Court on the strength of his position as Captain of the Guards, which he had retained on handing in his ministerial resignation. Before the Reviews he used to receive his orders from the Queen, the young Queen who would fain be the only woman worshipped, and bore the exile ill-will for having stolen the hearts of some. One day she said to the Duke in an incensed tone of voice which intensified the haughtiness of her demeanour, "that he had better go to Saint-Vrain for Madame Du Barry's orders,

¹ See Vatel, Vol. ii., p. 380.

than come to Versailles for hers." ¹ Which did not in the least prevent the Duchess d'Aiguillon from inviting the ex-favourite to stay with her for some time on her estate in Languedoc.

Besides the relatives of the Countess, the usual guests at Saint-Vrain were Joseph-Honoré de Vares, Marquis de Fauga and a friend of Chon Du Barry, and the Viscount Adolphe, who was ready enough to forego the pleasure of his wife's society, but could not do without that of his aunt. Then there was another enthusiastic admirer of her ladyship, Major the Viscount de Langle, who was more famous for his marvellous exploits in love and war than for his many literary productions. He was fifty-nine and ugly, but his wit and gaiety made amends. Whether he was in love with the lady of the house or not, he assisted her in restoring her affairs to some sort of order. "Walking, and play for very low stakes were our chief occupation at Saint-Vrain," he wrote; ". . . she often lost, and one evening, being more unfortunate than usual, doubled her loss by trying to clear it all at once, and ended by owing me 1,500,000 livres. She was the only one to feel any anxiety; the spectators were as sure as I myself that I should continue to play until we were quits." Lesser excitements were provided when the children of her women were christened; she herself stood godmother, while the young Viscount, the Marquis or the Major was godfather, as may still be seen from the registers of the parish of Saint-Vrain.

Madame Rançon de Montrabé had left the convent of Sainte-Elisabeth when Louis XV. died, and lived for some time in Paris with her husband. In September, 1775, she moved to be near her daughter, who had bought for her, from her friend, Buffault, the "Maison Rouge" close by Villiers-sur-Orge. The château was complete in every way, with outhouses, stables, chapel, dovecote and greenhouse; the park and gardens were surrounded by high walls, as were the vineyards and arable land of the "Maison Blanche." The estate and the furniture together were worth 53,000

¹ Belleval, *Souvenirs d'un cheval-léger*, p. 120.

livres, and to pay for this gift to her mother, Madame Du Barry sold her hôtel in the Avenue de Paris to the Count de Provence, who had not deserted her in her misfortune. Her arms above the great gateway were replaced by the escutcheon of France, one day to be torn down by the revolutionaries. The deed of purchase was signed on October 23 at Louveciennes, where the Countess had been allowed to return, the Court being at Fontainebleau.

This permission augured well for her being permitted to enjoy more permanent possession of her beloved estate, and she would have been perfectly happy, but for the further troubles coming upon her. A pamphlet had just been published in London, entitled *Les Anecdotes sur Madame la Comtesse Du Barry*. The work was "so scandalously spicy in its tone that, in spite of there being no restrictions on the book-trade, it was only sold surreptitiously."¹ In daring to issue such a book the author, Pidansat de Mayrobert, took advantage of his victim's disgrace, but the Minister in Attendance wrote to the Lieutenant of Police: "Monsieur, I have already for some time known of the very evil book on Madame Du Barry, and it is really important that it should not obtain notoriety. You cannot use too great precautions to prevent this happening." Nevertheless many copies were put in circulation. The preface announces that the "author has found a subject, which to the interest of history adds all the delights of a romance," a statement meaning no more than that he has interspersed his pitiful inventions with a few authenticated facts in order to give them a firmer foundation. Others were tempted by his success, and contributed still further to the mass of audacious calumnies and incredible slanders spread abroad by this petty secretary to the Duke de Chartres, a man who frequented the society of Bachaumont, and who, though well known in antechambers, was completely ignorant of Court life.

¹ *Mémoires secrets*, vol. viii., pp. 198 and 220. The writer remarks that "there is no reason to believe it to be the Sieur Morande's pamphlet, since Beaumarchais bought up the manuscript."

In October, 1776, the Count de Maurepas at last obtained full liberty for his protégé, whose sentence had lasted two years and a half. Her perfect submission won from Louis XVI. the decision that besides her personal property, valued at nearly two millions in gold and jewels, Madame Du Barry should be allowed to retain her 40,000 livres income from the Nantes shops, her life-annuity of 105,000 livres from the Hôtel de Ville, and finally her use of Louveciennes and its artistic treasures. The Countess left Saint-Vrain without regret, especially as it bore the unpleasant memory of three unknown men, who had tried to assassinate her in her own room in broad daylight.¹

Before definitely settling at Louveciennes, she spent some time in Paris with Adolphe Du Barry,² and then at last took possession of her little château, from which she was destined to be so forcibly parted in 1793 by the revolutionaries. Always tactful and prudent, she tried not to attract attention, and the entertainments she began giving were very discreet in tone, for Versailles was near, and she had no desire of their being heard of there.

Chon Du Barry accompanied the Countess, to whom she was indispensable in the supervision of her household. Among the friends who gathered round her the Viscount de Langle was still to be counted, although the cordiality between them had lessened. The Major had wanted the lady of the house to engage as companion a young girl, whom he stated to be his daughter, and she had refused. He could not understand her scruples, grew cold towards her and gradually broke off the acquaintance. But he was still sufficiently often at the château to be able to tell whoever cared to ask, all sorts of particulars. "One day when I was at Limours," he wrote, "I met Monsieur de Choiseul. 'You are often at Madame Du Barry's?' he asked me. I

¹ Le Pot d'Auteuil sold the estate most profitably to a Monsieur de Goulade, and Langle affirms that the lawyer himself made 195,000 livres by the transaction.

² That the Countess did so may be gathered from a remark of Langle on her fondness for play, having met her at Adolphe Du Barry's playing trente-et-quarante.

assented. 'She still sees much company?' 'Yes, monsieur le Duc.' 'Do her servants still act?' 'Yes, monsieur le Duc.' 'But has she a large enough income to pay for all these expenses?' 'I believe so, monsieur le Duc.'"

The Duke de Choiseul had hoped more from the new reign, as the Duchess, his wife, made very plain in the biting expressions she aimed at Louis XVI. The latter was coming more and more under the domination of Marie Antoinette, his fascinating Queen, who was so full of vivacity, caprice and charm. At Court much was altered; the new Court was even less wise than the old, but full of youth and laughter, in spite of the three cross-grained old aunts, who now were jealous of the triumphant Queen. The Count d'Artois thought only of women, racing and plays, and only incidentally provided the first scions of the Royal House. The serious and intelligent Count de Provence was secretly opposed to the Queen, and was seconded by Madame. The Duchess de Valentinois, who was so devoted to the favourite, had recently died; Madame de Forcalquier had thought it wisest to retire; Madame de Mirepoix scarcely ever left Paris, nor did the Duchess de Mazarin and many others. Their place had been taken by the friends of Marie Antoinette, and the libellers altered their tactics, and already began to attack the young Queen.

Meanwhile the Countess Du Barry received illustrious visitors in her charming retreat. In May, 1777, the Emperor, under the name of the Count de Falkenstein, had at last undertaken his long-planned journey to France. The Queen was as anxious as she was delighted, for the Austrian Court had other and severer traditions than the French; her big brother always spoke unreservedly, and he would find much to criticise. He was liked, however, in spite of his affectation of simplicity, and of his sarcasms on the subject of fair ladies' extravagant fashions, their too generous use of paint, or their towering coiffures. Marie Antoinette had often reason to be offended with her brother, and particularly so on one occasion, when he seriously grieved her by an excursion to Marly. "The Count de Falkenstein,"

wrote a gazetteer, "being curious to see the Countess Du Barry, but anxious to do so without formality, attained his object under the pretext of visiting her villa at Luciennes one day when he knew she would be there. He stayed with her, alone, for two hours, and has since said that she pleased him very much, but that he had thought she would be better-looking." ¹

Yet the Countess, now thirty-four years of age, was still very pretty, a little pale and worn perhaps after the suffering she had gone through and the tediousness of her exile, but with a refined beauty that would not appeal to the Teutonic taste of Joseph II. But like everyone else he could not resist her graceful charm, and for two whole hours he was under her spell. "As they proposed to walk and examine the external beauties of the villa of Louveciennes, the Prince offered his arm to the Countess, who seemed ashamed of so much honour, and vowed she was not worthy of it. 'Do not be troubled,' said the Emperor, 'beauty is ever a queen.'" This visit from the foreign Prince greatly honoured Madame Du Barry, for he was so much sought after that Madame Geoffrin said "she would die of grief" if he did not come to see her, while the Marquise Du Deffand has gloried before all posterity because she won a word from Joseph II.

Mercy was astounded at the event, and could do no more than give an account of it to Maria Theresa, ascribing it

¹ *Mémoires secrets*, Vol. x., p. 139. A more circumstantial account insists that the meeting was accidental. "[The Queen] is once more offended and this is the cause. The Emperor went alone on foot to see the engine at Marly; he saw a fine house close by, and asked whose it was. He was told it was the villa of Louveciennes, and on his expressing a wish to see it, he was informed that he was quite free to do so. The Prince went through the apartments and came into the garden, where he saw a beautiful lady walking alone. He asked who she was, and was told that she was Madame Du Barry, the mistress of the charming dwelling. The Emperor immediately went up to her, complimented her, and walked and talked with her for a long time. He returned to Versailles very pleased at this happy accident, on which he made several jokes, even paying some tribute of praise to the fair recluse."—*Correspondance secrète sur Louis XVI.*, Vol. i., p. 61.

entirely to accident. "The Emperor met Madame Du Barry in the gardens, and conversed with her a few minutes." But the Empress severely censured her son.¹

The Choiseuls hoped to revenge themselves by the magnificent reception they were preparing for Joseph II. On leaving Paris the illustrious traveller was to go by the Loire, and would not pass far from Chanteloup. He was said to be going to break his journey there but he did nothing of the kind. The Duke's many guests were as disappointed as their host. The minister who had contrived the Alliance could not have expected such neglect, and Madame Du Barry's triumph must have wounded his vanity still more.²

In the very natural pride due to such a marked distinction, the Countess could afford to read with contempt *The English Spy*, a new publication of which a highly-seasoned page had been devoted to her. Besides she was at this time more concerned at an important case that was one day to inspire the heroine of the affair of the Queen's necklace. The Countess was fairly intimate with a Dame Cahüet de Villers, a lady well-born, beautiful and distinguished, an artist and "a very devil for intrigue." A chronicler relates how "this woman had become intimately acquainted with Madame Du Barry, had since the death of the King won the favour of the Count de Maurepas' friends, and had gained some authority over the young Queen, who even confided to her various secret affairs of minor importance." She was a great flirt, and very extravagant. Her husband, who was Paymaster of the King's Household, could not satisfy her demands, although he was

¹ Cf. Boutry, *Autour de Marie-Antoinette*, p. 362. The Emperor did not stop at Ferney, where he was expected by Voltaire, for Maria Theresa had made him promise not to visit the philosopher. She wrote to Mercy: "I shall not conceal from you that I should much rather the Emperor had been to Chanteloup, if only for one or two hours, without necessarily dining or staying the night there. I should have been pleased if he had abstained from seeing the despicable Du Barry, and I rejoice with all my heart that in passing Geneva he avoided meeting the unfortunate Voltaire."

² Choiseul only met Joseph II. once, and then at a public audience which he held in Paris.

helped in the task by her lover, Monsieur de Saint-Charles, the Intendant of Her Majesty's finances. Madame de Cahüet went to see him every Saturday at Versailles, and stayed in his rooms in the Château. Thus she easily obtained access to orders and warrants signed by Marie Antoinette. She copied the Queen's handwriting, and wrote herself letters "of the tenderest description," which she said were from Her Majesty. These she read to a few people, whom she told she had been entrusted with various purchases, and even with important loans, by the Queen. She made many dupes.

Her doings became known, and naturally the Queen and her supporters were indignant. Mercy drew up a complaint, and demanded her arrest, but the case was kept secret in order to avoid scandal. "The full investigation of this woman's activities," wrote the Ambassador, "would compromise the names of several well-known people, if the final sentence were to be pronounced by an ordinary tribunal."¹ Cahüet de Villers was arrested with his wife on March 18, 1777, but he was speedily released, his innocence having been proved. On August 5 the culprit was transferred from the Bastille to the convent of La Croix under the name of Madame de Noyan. Although Madame Du Barry had not been concerned in the least in the intrigues of the adventuress, she felt some anxiety on account of the relations that had existed between them, and certainly she would have been exposed to malevolent attacks if the case had been made public.

The liaison of the Countess with Louis-Hercule-Timoléon de Brissac, Duke de Cossé, was no secret, but until their almost married life together, they showed some discretion in concealing their love. Monsieur de Cossé, Lieutenant-

¹ Mercy asserted that "this de Villers had been largely instrumental in the elevation of Madame Du Barry," but no confirmation of his statement can be found. Madame Campan, on the other hand, said that even before Louis XV. died, she had swindled many by passing herself off as the King's mistress, whom the fear of angering Madame Du Barry "prevented from openly enjoying the title."

colonel of the Swiss Guards and Governor of Paris, was the son of the brave Marshal Jean-Paul-Timoléon, Duke de Brissac and Peer of France. The latter was seventy-six at the time of Louis XV.'s death, and only by some strange confusion can he have been thought to be the lover of Madame Du Barry.¹

In 1760 Louis-Hercule-Timoléon had married Diane, the second daughter of the Duke de Nivernais. He was an accomplished gentleman with an affable nobility of demeanour, in appearance tall and fair with fine blue eyes, as described by Saint-Just in his erotic poem *Organt*. He had for long been counted among the former favourite's intimate friends, having ever since 1770 occupied at Versailles a suite of apartments adjoining hers. Louis XVI. kept him rather at a distance "for not having deserted Madame Du Barry in her disgrace, after having courted her in her greatness."

He was very susceptible to the charm of women, even after the beauty of the Countess had fixed his wandering affections. An eye-witness at the funeral obsequies of the Marshal de Brissac relates how the son of the deceased scandalised a number of people by appearing "bare-headed and well-powdered, without hat or crape, and ogling with most unseasonable affectation the members of the fair sex whom he passed." For all his excessive gallantry he was a brave soldier and possessed many admirable qualities. He strove to make life as agreeable as possible for his mistress, and the large fortune at his disposal crowned his efforts with success. Her personal luxury became as splendid as heretofore, and although she lived quietly in retirement, "she kept up a large establishment, though seeing but few people," said the Duke de Croÿ, who visited her in 1778. "I found her still in good health, and as

¹ This confusion is the work of the Goncourts. Their description of the fine, old man, "whose soul like his attire was of the days of Louis XIV." should be compared with the *Souvenirs de Madame Vigée Le Brun*. Louis-Hercule-Timoléon was forty-six years of age in 1780, when he took the title of Duke de Brissac on the death of his father.

always affecting a higher mode of life than was to be expected. She was so accustomed to expenditure that it seemed quite natural to her. For a long while we stood together on the balcony conversing about the late King, and I was most surprised to find myself there, who had never taken any notice of her in her ascendancy. She talked very well, and one would never have suspected what she once was." Nor was she as "forsaken" as the good Duke imagined, for Monsieur de Cossé sometimes took her to Paris, where she paid visits to various fashionable drawing-rooms; she had a box at the Opera, and was present during the Carnival festivities.

When Voltaire came to Paris in February, 1778, she was one of his first visitors. The interview caused some surprise, for many were ignorant of Madame Du Barry's relations with the great man. Not only was she a friend of the philosopher of Ferney, but she was a customer at his watch factory as well. "On Friday," wrote the gazetteers, "Monsieur de Voltaire worked so long that his secretary had no time to dress. The Countess Du Barry presented herself after dinner, being desirous of visiting him. The aged invalid was with difficulty persuaded to see her, for to appear in undress and without preparation wounded his vanity. He at last gave way to her entreaties, and made amends for any shortcomings in his outward elegance by the graces of his conversation."

As was to be expected, there was a crowd in the illustrious philosopher's antechamber after his twenty years' absence from Paris. A few timid spirits hesitated at the door, among whom was a future member of the National Convention. Young Brissot wanted to dedicate to Voltaire his *Théorie des lois criminelles*, or at least to be sure of a letter from him on the subject. In his memoirs he writes :

I had hardly reached the antechamber, where there were quite as many people as the day before; I heard a noise from inside, and the door was half opened.

Seized with my stupid shyness, I hurriedly rushed downstairs again, but being ashamed of myself retraced my steps.

A woman, whom the master of the house had just politely conducted to the door, stood at the foot of the stairs. She was beautiful and had an agreeable countenance. I did not hesitate to address her, asking her if she thought I could be introduced to Voltaire, and ingenuously telling her the reason for my visit. "Monsieur de Voltaire has scarcely received anyone to-day," she replied kindly, "but I have just been granted that favour, monsieur, and I have no doubt you too will receive it." And as if she divined my shyness from my embarrassed air, she herself called the master of the house, who had not yet closed the door on her. I was caught. She left me, after having replied to my profound salutations with a most kindly and encouraging smile. . . . It was Madame Du Barry. When I recalled her sweet and gracious smile, I felt more lenient towards the favourite.

Madame Du Barry's curiosity in another matter was satisfied in a way that Madame Campan found most improper. This summer of 1778 was the time when the Queen began the much talked of evening walks in the gardens of Versailles, which were imprudently left open to the public. The Countess wanted to see for herself what these "scandalous nocturnal outings," described by the pamphleteers, could be. She therefore appeared one evening, accompanied by one of her women and a footman, in the park that had beheld her in her glory, and whither she now came closely veiled and in secret. She faced it out, however, and even sat down on the very bench where the Queen was resting: but her tall footman, being well known at the Château, betrayed her presence. The incident was in no way responsible for the measures taken the following year to keep the crowd away from the Princess.¹

The hot days passed without inconvenience to the Countess, and the fine autumn brought her friends to the shady groves of Louveciennes, and even some former enemies of the late King's court. Her gentleness and discretion had won over all who had formerly raged against

¹ Madame Campan states that she recognised the ex-favourite's sister-in-law in the veiled woman who accompanied her.

her. "Madame d'Ossun, daughter of the Countess de Grammont who was exiled, was there," wrote the Count d'Espinchal. Monsieur and Madame de Beauvau, too, were on intimate terms with her ladyship, as is seen in the following note from the Prince de Beauvau, from which it would also appear that Madame de Mirepoix and the Countess were drifting apart :

How does Madame la Comtesse feel after her fatigue ? Is she still troubled by the odour from the river ? I should be very grieved were she not to enjoy all the charms of Louveciennes, the neighbourhood of which is such a pleasure to me.

If we should have the honour of seeing you here, how pleased Madame de Beauvau would be ; but it were better you did not come this week, when Madame de Mirepoix will be with us.

Pray accept, Madame, my devoted homage.

In the little château, and still more often in the white villa overlooking the Seine, Madame Du Barry entertained her guests with supper-parties, card-parties or plays. Mademoiselle Chon and her kinswomen assisted her in receiving them, but no longer was the young Adolphe Du Barry to be seen among her devoted relatives. He had left for Spa with his wife, and Sophie de Tournon, his sister-in-law. Their departure in the beginning of winter just when the season at the watering-place was coming to an end, caused some surprise. What motive could he have for leaving Paris so suddenly ? Was he at last tired of his enslavement, weary of unrequited love, jealous of Brissac and the other adorers of the Countess ? On the *Ridotto*, where he spent all his time, he made the acquaintance of an Irish nobleman, named Rice, who was like himself passionately devoted to cards, and, unlike him, very soon became equally so to the Viscountess Du Barry. They left Spa for Bath, where they stayed in the Royal Crescent with all their servants. Adolphe drowned his griefs in festivities and supper-parties. One day he decided that the attentions of Rice to his wife were unseemly, and after a violent quarrel



THE PAVILION OF LOUVECIENNES
from an engraving by Nattes

they determined to fight a duel. On November 18, at one o'clock in the morning, they met on the downs of Claverton and waited for the dawn before they began. Rice was the first to be wounded, but killed his adversary by a shot in the breast. Only after twenty-four hours did the lovely widow think of removing the body of her husband, who was buried at Bathampton.

Madame Du Barry's grief was great, and this time she received sympathy from all. The Duke d'Aiguillon, who had known of his former cornet's attachment to her, wrote to his friend from his lonely place of exile :

Aiguillon, *December 16, 1778.*

I am certain, Madame la Comtesse, that you have been painfully moved by the cruel loss you have suffered, and I do not wish to add to the grief you must feel, the importunity of my compliments. I have begged Mademoiselle Du Barry to be so kind as to take my place, and once more assure you on this sad occasion of my sincerest participation in all that concerns you. I flatter myself that you can have no doubt as to my feelings, and that I have no need to repeat my profession of faith in this respect, for you must long since have been convinced of its truth. The Viscountess Du Barry is indeed much to be pitied at this time, but I know your affection for her too well not to be persuaded that you will do all in your power to soften her misfortune, and that she will obtain from you the help and consideration she needs. Such a friend as you makes amends for all. I hope that the sadness she will bring you and the cares with which you will surround her may not affect your health, and that she may always be as kind and brilliant as I am told she is now.

Remember me always with kindness, Madame la Comtesse, and never doubt my gratitude, attachment and respect.

The Duke d'Aiguillon.

Madame d'Aiguillon begs me to assure you of her sympathy.

But the young Viscountess had no need of consolation. She was rid of a tiresome husband, and she intended to draw all the advantage she could from her annoying first

marriage. On coming to Paris she proceeded, in a way not very flattering to the family, to ask for letters-patent, by which to change her married name for her own of de Tournon. Her request was granted and on February 13, 1780, she reappeared at Court. The Roué, who had loved his son, replied to the insult. The memorandum he printed, contesting the advantages conferred on his daughter-in-law by her marriage contract, was much admired even outside the Court. It was written with bitter eloquence in the Count's customary elevated style.¹

Madame Du Barry's grief was mitigated by Brissac's constant affection, and by the love of a newcomer in her life, Henry Seymour.² He was not, as has been stated by the Goncourts, the English Ambassador in France, but a member of the illustrious house of Somerset, and possessed of considerable property in the West of England. In October, 1775, he had taken a second wife, the Countess Louise de Ponthon, from Normandy, and had settled between Pont-Marly and Louveciennes in the little château of Prunay which he had bought. The gallant Englishman and his fair neighbour soon became acquainted, love sprang up in their hearts, and Madame Du Barry's letters to the Count relate the history of the episode.³

The first note is of slight interest, and only shows on what good terms she was with the owners of Prunay. The second is full of coquetry, and already hints at her feelings. "It has long been held that little attentions keep friendship alive, and Monsieur Seymour may rest assured that at Louveciennes his pleasure is always thought of. He seemed very eager to possess a coin that was foolishly thrown away on a little game of *loto*. It dates from Louis XIV.'s time,

¹ Two years later the young widow married one of her kinsmen, Marc-Antoine de Tournon, Marquis de Claveyron, and died childless, three years afterwards.

² Henry Seymour (1729-1805), nephew of the eighth Duke of Somerset; groom of the bedchamber; M.P., Totnes, 1763; Huntingdon, 1768-74; Evesham, 1774-80.

³ Vatel carefully verified the accuracy of this episode, which had already been told by the Goncourts, and he added another unpublished letter to theirs.

an age which Monsieur Seymour greatly admires, and of whose wealth of wonders the ladies of Louveciennes send him this little specimen. . . . There is no news here, except that the little dog is well."

Soon Seymour declared his passion, and her ladyship responded heart and soul. "The certainty of your affection, my beloved friend, is the happiness of my life. Believe that to my heart these two days are long indeed, and had it the power to shorten them I should suffer no more. I expect you on Saturday with the impatience of one who is all yours, and I hope you will want for nothing. Farewell! I am yours."

Then followed the usual fluctuations between uncertainty and hope. Seymour often complained, for she was still divinely fair, and Brissac claimed sole right over her coveted beauty. How tender her love-letters are, and what passionate eloquence they breathe, the eloquence of a woman who for the first time loves with depth and ardour! She surrenders herself completely and avows it with beautiful sincerity. ". . . My heart is all yours and only yours, and if I have in any way failed to fulfil my promise, my fingers alone are at fault. I have been very indisposed since you left me, and I assure you I have been too weak to think of anything but you. Farewell, my beloved friend, I love you and again I love you, and think myself happy. I embrace you a thousand times, and am always yours. Come soon."

But between them was jealous Brissac whom they gently tried to keep at a distance. The prudent and diplomatic Countess manipulated both the Duke and Seymour, her friend and her adored, and she played her difficult double game with delicate tact. Each of the two men, however, hated the other, and kept close watch on his actions. "I only send you one word," she wrote to Seymour, "and that would be reproachful had I the heart to make it so. I am so tired from writing four long letters, that I have only the strength to tell you I love you. To-morrow I shall let you know what has prevented me from giving you my news,

but be sure that whatever you may say, you are my heart's one thought. Farewell, I am too weak to say more."

After Seymour and his reproaches came Brissac with his suspicions. "I am not going to Paris to-day," wrote the lady of Louveciennes to Prunay, "because the person whom I intended to see, came here on Tuesday just after you had left. His visit has greatly distressed me, for I believe you were its object. Farewell, I expect you with the impatience of a heart that is all yours, and that in spite of your injustice, knows too well that it can never be another's. I think of you, and tell you so, and tell you again, and only regret that I may not tell you so for ever."

Henry Seymour would not brook even the thought of sharing her favour, and broke off their short liaison, regardless of the tears he made her weep. Madame Du Barry wrote him her last letter in despair. "There is no use in writing of my tenderness and affection for you, which you know. But what you do not know is my suffering. You have not deigned to reassure me on that which so closely concerns my soul, and I must then believe that my peace and happiness are of little moment to you. I speak of it with regret, but it is the last time. What good is it that my head is well when I am sick at heart? Yet with earnestness and courage I shall succeed in mastering my pain, though to do so is a hard and woeful task. But it is necessary, and is the one remaining sacrifice I must make. My heart has made all the rest; this is for my reason to undertake. Farewell, and believe that you alone will always fill my heart."

Time brought oblivion to her mobile nature and gently healed her wound. The Duke took her to his estate in Normandy in order to separate her from his rival. She came to Bayeux, where the Condé Regiment, commanded by her brother-in-law, Du Barry d'Hargicourt, was garrisoned, and grand military entertainments were held in her honour. The sham fight organised in the neighbourhood attracted a considerable crowd; a magnificent ball was given by the officers of the regiment, at which every one of note in the

country round was present, unafflicted by scruples as to welcoming the former mistress of Louis XV.

Madame Du Barry retained, it is clear, some of her prestige as well as all her charm. Adolphe's friend, Monsieur de Belleval, visited her at Louveciennes in 1783, and said she was as beautiful as she had been in 1769. "I had not seen her for eight years, but I had only to mention my name, and she exclaimed, as she used, 'Ah! my redcoat.' But instead of bursting into the happy peal of laughter of former days, the tears came to her eyes; I reminded her of the past and all that she had lost."

Yet, were it not for her love-tragedy, Madame Du Barry had every reason to be happy. Her friends surrounded her with affectionate care, Brissac was more and more deeply in love, and only thought of satisfying the extravagant desires of his beloved. Moreover she was profiting by an excessive liberality on the part of the State. The pension of fifty thousand livres, that she enjoyed by a decree of December 31, 1769, was returned to the King, who allowed her in exchange a capital of one million two hundred and fifty thousand livres. The transaction was highly disadvantageous to the Treasury, but its possibility is explained by the date (April 23, 1784) of the deed; Necker would certainly have refused the Countess such a favour, but his successor, Calonne, was the most wasteful of ministers, and had been devoted to Madame Du Barry ever since they had fought the Breton Parliament together on d'Aiguillon's behalf.

At this time, too, Marie Antoinette was beginning to lose her prejudice against the Countess, and with a greater experience of life was able to judge her more leniently. "Her good behaviour," wrote one of Madame Du Barry's friends, "had inspired the Queen with the desire to meet her. The Opera Ball was a convenient opportunity for gratifying this wish. The Duke de Choiseul was there, and the fact that they were masked enabled these three people to converse in one of the boxes for several hours. The Queen was very pleased with Madame Du Barry's explana-

tions, and showed such satisfaction with her good conduct that, on leaving, Her Majesty gave her permission to turn to her on every occasion and at any time when she could be useful to her, of which favour the Countess has since successfully availed herself. As I witnessed the whole proceeding at the Opera Ball, I spent the next day at Luciennes and the Countess told me all these particulars." ¹

This interview, through which the Court became reconciled with Madame Du Barry, probably took place after the purchase of Saint-Cloud. The ex-favourite was instrumental in satisfying the Queen's desire to possess the château, as has been related by the Marquis de Bouillé in his memoirs. "When the Queen wanted the King to give her Saint-Cloud, the Duke d'Orléans, to whom the Château belonged, asked a price (ten millions, I believe), that Louis XVI. considered exorbitant; and in spite of his wish to gratify the Queen's fancy, he refused to make such a sacrifice. The Baron de Breteuil, then Minister of the King's Household, was devoted to the Queen's interests, and tried in vain every means of making the Duke lessen his demands. At last he thought of applying to Madame Du Barry and charging her with the negotiation of the business through the Duke de Brissac, over whom she exercised great sway, and who in turn had much influence over Madame de Montesson, the unacknowledged wife of the Prince. Madame Du Barry was eager to do all in her power to satisfy the Queen's wishes, and induced Monsieur de Brissac to win the interest of Madame de Montesson by flattering promises from the Court. The latter persuaded the Duke to lower his price by two or three millions, and the Château of Saint-Cloud became the property of the Queen." ²

¹ This account is by the Count d'Espinchal. He adds that "after this event, several women at Court, among them some who had hitherto opposed her . . . visited Madame Du Barry at Louveciennes, and were pleased with her good taste, manners and demeanour."

² *Souvenirs du Marquis de Bouillé*, Vol. II., p. 112. The difficulties of acquiring Saint-Cloud were described by the Queen's Secretary, who did not seem to have heard of Madame Du Barry's intervention. *Mémoires secrets de J.-M. Augeard*, pp. 134-140.

Madame Du Barry's intervention in this delicate transaction won her another friend and protector in Monsieur de Breteuil, who had staked his pride on succeeding. The Queen, too, did not hesitate to give her personal support to the Countess, when the latter was driven by her brother-in-law's pressing demands for help to make further applications to the Treasury.¹ Calonne himself pointed out to her the means of attaining her ends. "If you believe," he wrote to her, "that Monsieur de Breteuil is willing to undertake to lay before the Queen a petition from you, far be it from me to disapprove of your trying this method, which alone can put me in a position to give the King another account of your situation." De Breteuil also did Madame Du Barry the service of ridding her of the Roué for a while by a severe reprimand which made the importunate man see reason, at least temporarily.

The Baron de Breteuil became a regular visitor at Louveciennes and among the papers of the Countess may be found some charming notes from the minister. For instance, on September 18, 1785, he wrote to her :

In spite of my lively impatience to come and see you, Madame la Comtesse, I am compelled to be satisfied with asking for news of you. The circumstance has provoked me, and I trust that you will share my feeling, for my sentiments towards you assure me of yours for me. You know that on the 28th I have the honour of receiving the King and Queen. I am anxious that fair weather should favour my little entertainment, but fear the time of year ; as always, there is something to disturb the most agreeable expectations. I am surer now, after a week, than ever, that the pleasure of spending a few hours with you is balanced by the pain of not having repeated that happiness. My sincere devotion must persuade you of the truth of my feeling.

¹ The Roué had married again and returned to Paris. The *Correspondance secrète* gives an account of how he succeeded in obtaining from the Minister of Finance the sum of three hundred thousand livres said to be due to his sister-in-law, and how he then compelled her by threats to lend him 20,000.

As she kept open house, and her friends were always welcome, Monsieur de Breteuil invited himself to her with charming familiarity. "I am sending, Madame la Comtesse, to find out if you will let me come to dinner to-day. I shall have as much pleasure in spending the day with you as I have in assuring you of my sincere friendship."¹ Such was the note struck in all the correspondence between the courtiers and this woman of perfect distinction. Some idea of the delightful intercourse at Louveciennes is given by the following lines from the Marquis d'Armaillé, who wanted to prolong the intimate and at the same time affected conversation of the previous day :

Paris, *June 12, 1786.*

If you have any need of a cavalier, Madame la Comtesse, I am at your service. Until yesterday I was acquainted with some only of your charming qualities ; since then you have taught me what pleasure you take in conferring favours. It is a great thing, Madame la Comtesse, to be beautiful, charming and essential, yes, essential. I have no need to tell you that I never leave Luciennes without regret ; how can I control the inclinations of my heart ? I was anxious about my invalid, whom I have not found at all well. You remember that in winter, when the weather is not so fine, I left later, or not at all.

Here, Madame la Comtesse, is a sketch of the affair about which I spoke to you yesterday, when you showed such charming readiness to oblige. I shall certainly come as soon as I can, to talk more of it and thank you again.

I have prayed that the King in his own interests will not take Monsieur de Calonne with him to Cherbourg. I shall surely have the pleasure of seeing you soon, for had I no more than four free hours a day, I should spend one of them with you. One would gladly spend all one's life with you, Madame la Comtesse, even at the risk of that which I mentioned yesterday. You are the exception to the rule ; to know you and to be devoted to you are synonymous terms.

¹ A third note shows that Monsieur de Breteuil had the happiness of in turn receiving his fair neighbour of Louveciennes in his house at Saint-Cloud.

Be pleased to accept, Madame la Comtesse, the assurance of my gratitude and attachment.

Le Marquis d'Armaillé.

Madame Du Barry did more than receive visitors in her delightful château, where people so gladly lingered. She herself was much sought after on every side. Those who knew her wanted her for the charm of her society, while many strangers of note or people from the provinces staying in Paris, were curious to see what she was like. "We were dying to know the famous Madame Du Barry," wrote Dufort de Cheverny, a former protégé of Madame de Pompadour, and a friend of the Choiseuls. The Count and Countess de Cheverny were then staying in Paris as the guests of Don Olavides, Count de Pilos, who had made his escape from the dungeons of the Inquisition where he had suffered three years' imprisonment, a circumstance that apparently won him genuine respect from the compassionate Madame Du Barry. The Count de Cheverny continued :

So we fixed on a date, and the Count undertook to ask her if she would dine with him that day. She was living in the charming house of Luciennes that Louis XV. had given her, and Louis XVI. had allowed her to keep. We joined the small company on the appointed day, which was bitterly cold. The Countess arrived in a coach-and-six, and entered, bearing herself with ease and dignity. She was tall, had a beautiful figure, and was in every respect a very pretty woman. At the end of a quarter of an hour she was as much at her ease with us as we were at ours with her. My wife was the only other woman present, and all Madame Du Barry's attentions were for her and the master of the house. Her manner towards everyone was kindness and affability itself. The President de Salaberry and his nephew, the Chevalier de Pontgibaud, were there, as well as several others. She led the conversation, and spoke first of Luciennes. We knew that it was a charming place, as luxurious and magnificent as it was tastefully arranged. . . . Her pretty face was slightly flushed ; she told us that she took a cold bath every day. She showed us that under her long cloak she only wore a shift and a very light evening-

gown. Everything she had on was made with the magnificent costliness to which her former splendour had accustomed her, and I have never seen such beautiful cambric. . . . The dinner-party was delightful, and she carried all before her. . . .

Conversation after dinner was more serious ; I brought up several subjects that concerned her particularly, and her candour was most attractive. With regard to the Duke de Choiseul, she expressed regret at not having enjoyed his friendship. She told us of all the trouble she had been put to in attempting to win it, and said that, but for his sister, the Duchess de Grammont, she would have succeeded. She complained of no one, and said nothing spiteful. . . .

At six o'clock she left us . . . leaving behind her the impression that, with unexampled good-nature, she had had the sense to return to a less pretentious station in life, and that she must have been an altogether delightful mistress. We were no longer surprised at the part she had played in the life of a man of sixty-four years, who was weary of every pleasure. Her conversation left no disagreeable after-taste. We dined a second time in her company in the house of the Count de Pilos.¹

Far from rousing prejudice against her, the liaison of the Countess with the Duke de Brissac was an effective means of preventing adverse public opinion. Such arrangements were in the fashion, and all that was asked was that the parties to them should exercise discretion ; nor had the Duke and the ex-favourite any inclination to offend against outward propriety.² She used to come in the evenings to

¹ *Mémoires du Dufort, Comte de Cheverny, Introduceur des ambassadeurs*, Paris, 1886. Vol. II., p. 22.

² De Brissac lived on perfectly good terms with his wife, whose letters to him show that she was not in the least disturbed at his liaison with Madame Du Barry. His daughter, the Duchess de Mortemart, was as certainly a friend of the Countess, as may be seen from the two following notes. They probably date from 1788, as indeed Madame de Mortemart herself indicated in a letter of 1791.

"Madame de Mortemart has the honour to present Madame la Comtesse Du Barry a thousand compliments, and begs her to be so kind as to give her news of Monsieur her father ; she would have sent before to Luciennes, had she not feared to trouble Madame la

the fine hôtel de Brissac in the rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain, where she had her suite of rooms next to those of the owner. The Duke was a lover of art, and one of its most ardent patrons ; he owned an extremely fine collection of treasures, that wealth and good taste had enabled him to acquire. In the house of her friend Madame Du Barry found many a thing to please her æsthetic fancy ; it reminded her of her own Louveciennes, though extended and amplified. The picture gallery boasted several representatives of the Italian and* Dutch schools, and among the many portraits adorning the walls of the large salons was more than one depicting the fair lineaments of his beloved. On pieces of furniture by Boule, enriched with gilt bronze, stood old Chinese and Japanese porcelain, and sea-green pedestals or porphyry columns supported bronze and marble statuary.¹ The books in the library were stamped with his arms ; sable, three bars or, indented on the lower side. The Duke, who was a great reader and very well-informed, took the part of the philosophers, and supported their novel ideas. He initiated his mistress in the new tendencies of thought, thus preparing her for a second political career, and she showed herself an apt and serious pupil. " Since her retirement," wrote the Count d'Espinchal, " reading has next to her toilette been her chief occupation."

The affair of the Queen's necklace interrupted the even tenour of Madame Du Barry's existence. She was indeed only indirectly concerned in the matter, even though the famous necklace, which Rohan bought as he supposed at the Queen's desire, was originally intended by the jeweller Boehmer for the Countess. But much might be feared Comtesse Du Barry, and begs her to accept the assurance of her devotion."

" Pray accept, Madame, all my thanks for your kindness, and my regret at having to deny myself the pleasure of seeing you before my departure. I am deeply grieved at the thought of not seeing my father for so long a time, and at not being permitted to embrace him outside Paris before I leave him. But we must be resigned, since nothing else remains to us."

¹ The inventory of the Duke de Brissac's collection has been published by Vatel.

from the chief culprit, Madame de la Motte de Valois, who in her attacks implicated not only her dupe the Cardinal Prince Louis, but also all who were in the least connected with this grievous affair.

On December 12, 1785, Madame Du Barry was summoned to appear before the examining chamber, sitting at the Bastille, which was then transformed into a judiciary prison. She declared that she "had no knowledge of the circumstances enumerated, other than of the fact that about three years ago, Madame de la Motte came to beg for her favour and protection. She wished for her help in laying before the King a petition in which she besought His Majesty to allow her to resume possession of estates, that had formerly belonged to her family, but had returned to the Crown. . . ." The suppliant "wearied the Countess with her tears," and the latter finally took the document, "and put it on the mantelpiece with the fixed intention of leaving the matter at that." In fact she burnt it. But when she heard that the accused signed her letters "Marie-Antoinette de France," she thought she remembered that the petition left on her hands bore the same signature. If this were so, the accusation of attempted forgery would fall to the ground. "The witness made these remarks before several people, without thinking that any conclusions might be drawn from them."¹

They could, in fact, almost have acquitted the accused, had she not refused to make use of them. She replied insolently, denying the existence of the petition, and asserted that she had only left a genealogical document with the Countess. The gazetteers dilated, as usual, upon the theme of the evidence of the former favourite, who was once more unsparingly libelled. Madame de la Motte felt humiliated at evidence which pictured her, the proud descendant of the Valois, as a suppliant before a Du Barry. In her memoirs, which were published in London after her escape from the Salpêtrière, she distorted the facts as follows:

¹ See Vatel, Vol. III., p. 412. M. Funck-Brentano in his *L'affaire du Collier* (Paris, 1901), has not mentioned the Du Barry episode.

"I cannot resist the temptation to say a few words on the part the *Dowager Queen* was made to play, the immaculate Du Barry of conventual memory. This woman's evidence affirmed that I had come to ask for her protection, and that I had left with her a petition, signed Marie-Antoinette de France. The truth is that I only went to see her out of curiosity, in a good coach-and-four. When we met she thought fit to take up an attitude of haughty impudence, but I soon put her in her place by making her feel the distance between her birth and mine. . . ."

Madame Du Barry followed with emotion every detail of the lawsuit, that was, in spite of all, destined to stain the fair fame of the Queen of France, and violently to shake the serenity of the throne, just at the time when monarchy was approaching a crisis. Women, and among them the Countess, secretly sympathised with the handsome Cardinal, Louis de Rohan, who was deeply in love with Her Majesty. But Madame Du Barry was troubled at her name being mixed up in the notorious affair, for above all she feared to become an object of public attention, and she jealously guarded her peaceful retirement. Madame Le Brun, who made her first stay at Louveciennes in 1786, has described the daily life of its mistress :

Both by word and deed she showed her goodness of heart, and she did much good at Louveciennes, where she succoured all the poor. We often visited some unfortunate person together, and I still remember her righteous indignation one day when, seeing a poor woman in child-bed who lacked every necessity, "What," asked Madame Du Barry, "you have no linen, nor wine, nor soup?" "Alas, nothing, Madame." We immediately returned to the château, and she sent for the housekeeper and the other servants who had not carried out her orders. I cannot describe the passion with which she reprimanded them, all the while making them put together a bundle of the necessary linen, which they had to take at once to the poor invalid, as well as some soup and claret.

Every day after dinner coffee was served in the villa that was so celebrated for the taste and magnificence of its

decorations. The first time Madame Du Barry showed it me, she said : " In this room Louis XV. did me the honour of dining. . . . " The drawing-room was enchanting ; it had the finest possible view, and the mantelpieces and doors were most beautifully worked ; the locks might be taken for masterpieces of goldsmiths' work, and the richness and the elegance of the furniture surpassed description.

Brissac, who was sometimes present at the sittings, was to own the portrait the artist was painting of her ladyship, " a small three-quarter length, in a morning-gown and a straw hat." By a coquettish whim of her sitter, the costume and arrangement were copied from the most precious miniature of her youth, that of Lawreince, thus inviting a comparison from which the second portrait scarcely suffered at all. She was " tall, but not too much so ; her proportions were generous, and her figure perhaps too full, but very beautiful. Her face was still charming, her features graceful and regular ; her grey hair curled like a child's ; only her complexion was beginning to spoil."

Madame Le Brun returned two years later to make a second portrait of the lady of Louveciennes. This time the Countess wore white satin, and was depicted holding a coronet and supporting her arm on a pedestal. Madame Le Brun was again given the rooms with the outlook on the Marly engine, whose " trying noise " disturbed her so much. But she admired the quantity of precious things collected in a gallery close by. " One could have imagined it to be a room belonging to the mistress of many monarchs, who had all enriched her with their gifts."

The artist loved animation and company, and did not find enough of either at Louveciennes. The society of Brissac was not sufficient, to her mind, nor was that of Monsieur de Monville, " an agreeable and most elegant man," who came occasionally to visit his friend of twenty years' standing. The attractive Countess de Souza, wife of the Portuguese Ambassador, and the Marquise de Brunoy



MADAME VIGÉE LE BRUN
From an engraving

were the only women on intimate terms with the mistress of the château.¹ But in spite of this quiet mode of life, Louveciennes was the scene of a most original reception at which Madame Le Brun was present. The envoys of Tippoo Sahib, Sultan of Mysore, who had been sent to petition France for help against England, had thought it their duty to lay the gifts of their sovereign with great ceremony at the feet of the ex-favourite. The fame of the beautiful mistress had crossed the seas and reached as far as India, and no doubt they still believed she possessed some influence.² They spread before her oriental treasures that were worthy of her beauty, and among them were some marvellous muslins. She hastened to offer Madame Le Brun a roll of the precious stuff, "embroidered with large detached flowers in perfectly shaded colours and gold." Years later, under the Consulate, the artist was unexpectedly invited to a large ball, and she made a dress of the Eastern material that reminded her of the gracious hospitality she had enjoyed in the past.

About this time Madame Du Barry lost two dear friends, Richelieu and his nephew, d'Aiguillon. The Marshal died in August, 1788, at the age of ninety-four, having been three times married: first under Louis XIV., at the age of fifteen, then under Louis XV., and lastly under Louis XVI., when eighty years of age. To the very end of his life he had filled the annals of his day with all kinds of amorous adventures. But old age and different customs had made his last days lonely, and Madame Du Barry was almost the only one to

¹ Madame de Souza, *née* Canillac, was a Frenchwoman, whom the Portuguese Ambassador, Don Vincent de Souza Coutinho, had married for love in 1773. She died in January, 1792. Her husband has often been confused with the Souza, also an Ambassador, who married Madame de Flahaut.

² A letter from the Marquise de Boissésou, Madame Du Barry's niece, written at Metz on August 24, 1788, refers to this event: "Tippoo Sahib's Ambassadors will thus take back to India, Madame, the idea for a new marvel, your villa on the hill; the news of the charming way in which you have received them has reached me here. I should have liked to see you do the honours of your villa."

mourn his loss. September 1 of the following year witnessed the death of "the most high and mighty Seigneur, Emmanuel-Armand-Duplessis de Richelieu, Duke d'Aiguillon, Peer of France, Count d'Agenois, etc.," in his hôtel in the rue de l'Université. Again the vault at the Sorbonne was opened, and again the Countess came to pray at the grave of the Richelieus.

Soon she suffered a more cruel loss, for on October 20, 1788, her mother died. Madame Rançon left all her property to her niece Betzy, the daughter of Jean Bécu, and now Marquise de Boissésou, and as executor she appointed Monsieur de Boissésou, Lieutenant-colonel of the Condé Dragoon regiment. Madame Du Barry, as a natural child, had no claim to the inheritance, but the husband of the deceased ought not to have been forgotten. To make amends, the Countess gave him an annuity of 2,000 livres, her liberality having "for object to convince the Sieur Nicolas Rançon de Montrabé, formerly in Government service, of her gratefulness for his constant kindness to Dame Anne Bécu, his wife, . . . as well as to the said Dame Du Barry, on various occasions, when she had reason to recognise the good qualities of the said Sieur de Montrabé, as well as his absolute integrity." The gift and all the praise appeased the good man, whose care of his step-daughter in her youth might have been better.

Political troubles began to afflict the Countess. She was devoted to de Brissac, and made his life her own. The Duke, who, ever since 1787, had been interested as to what matters should be submitted to the Notables, was displeased at having been excluded from the Assembly of his province. "Do you know," he wrote to Madame Du Barry from Vendôme, "that I am rather provoked at not having been nominated President of the provincial Assembly of Anjou? Of course I had not asked for it, but whose fault is it that I have been forgotten and passed over? It is beyond me to say, and I should be grieved, were it not for this consoling indolence. . . . But, dear friend, I must be off to see

the troops and must leave you with the assurance that I love you. . . .” In the second Assembly of the Notables, that met in 1788, Brissac was again forgotten and he complained bitterly, for he had faith in measures that would have prevented a bloody revolution.

CHAPTER VII

MADAME DU BARRY AND THE REVOLUTION

Madame du Barry and Politics again—Louveciennes at the time of the States-General—In October—The Theft of the Jewels—First Journey to London—Connection with the *émigrés* and English Society—Second and third Journeys—Imprisonment and Death of the Duke de Brissac.

MADAME DU BARRY, formerly an ardent royalist by position as well as by nature, was now less attracted to the absolutist doctrine.

With so many of the nobility both at Court and especially at Paris, she joined Necker's party, the party of the philosophers and the economists. For the changes in her condition and surroundings had prepared her for new ideas, she had been initiated by Brissac in the theories of Rousseau, and her woman's heart delighted in the beautiful illusions of justice and liberty.

She became closely acquainted with Monsieur and Madame Necker, the Marquis de Jaucourt, Choderlos de Laclos, and the Chevalier de Chastellux ; she received the Abbé Beliard, the learned economist, who was later to become one of her intimate friends. At Louveciennes, in her box at the Opera, in the salons of her friends, moral and political questions were discussed with all the wit and good-nature in the world ; these elegant gatherings were so well-meaning in their clamour for reform ; little did they dream they were on the eve of revolution. Yet the times were serious ; financial disaster threatened the country, while the fever of ideas spread and prepared the way for the social crisis that was so soon to extend even beyond the frontiers. Necker having induced the King to convoke the States-

General, the edict of January 24, 1789, decreeing the elections, was issued.

During the interval which preceded them, Madame Du Barry received from Clermont a letter that was very significant of the times. The Count d'Espinchal, a fervent admirer of the monarchy, had known her ladyship before her rise to favour. Since then circumstances had often brought them together, for Adolphe Du Barry, also of the light cavalry, had married his cousin of Tournon, and another of his relatives, Madame de Souza, the Portuguese Ambassador's wife, was still the "beloved friend" of the ex-favourite. The page of history sent by the noble Auvergnat to the lady of Louveciennes is written in the light and charming style of a courtier of Versailles :

Clermont, *March 6, 1789.*

I can no longer disguise from you, Madame la Comtesse, that one of the greatest of my griefs at my departure from the capital was that of leaving without the pleasure of seeing you. For you must know that to meet you is true happiness to me ; of this you may be sure, think on it how you please. It cannot anger you, this sentiment which you inspire, I know not why. You know of my regard for you, and I speak no more of it, having no need continually to assure you of its strength.

Whilst you were enjoying the pleasures of the Carnival, whilst at the Opera Ball you were listening to tales in which, unhappily, I bore no part, I was sadly taking my way along the high road, meditating on the evils of the State, and seeking to discover their remedy in a superb document of grievances, to be produced by my parish. Full of this beautiful thought I arrive ; but, alas ! I learn that naught remains to be done ; that our illustrious clergy, our scientific parsons have but just made alliance with the eminent town members of the Third Estate ; that they intend to prevail upon our simple-minded country folk to the end that when the despicable nobility, the ignorant upper clergy, speak, they may not gain a hearing. After that you would think these two thousand citizens, deeply stained as they must feel by their ancient privileges, would abandon, cede them all, the more

so because of their absurdity as part and parcel of the monarchy. By no means ; our noble Auvergnats turn a deaf ear to such arguments. They wish to remain noble, and are ready to condemn their colleagues who would preach them the new doctrine, which is so widespread in Paris, but so little known in the provinces.

That is how matters stand. Though all may turn out for the best, I, for my part, suffer some inconvenience from all these innovations. Last year I had opportunities for intrigues with the good wives of the Third Estate, which, however, proved ephemeral. Now how changed are the times : the Third Estate are on their guard, the nobles take care of themselves, the low clergy, by means of their alliance with the Third Estate, protect their housekeepers, and in the meantime we die of hunger. It is very hard. In Paris, life is still possible ; one plays the hypocrite ; but here all are bare-faced. Out on the wickedness of your Genevèse ! truly, he will make us pay dearly for his plans of a Republic.

Now I have acquainted you fully with what happens in Auvergne. As yet, however, all is quiet enough here. The minds of the people are all in a ferment, but will, I believe, soon calm down. Besides, it seems to me that, should there be an explosion, it would affect each order equally. There is no tendency to confusion. For my part, I only wish to hear of it when there is some question of discussing schemes concerning population, but in all other cases, they will deliberate separately, and thereon I build my hopes.

The bell rings, and I must leave you for an ill-cooked dinner, which must, however, be eaten.

I have returned, Madame la Comtesse, my fears, alas ! realised. Though in the country, I am not at my own home, but staying with an aunt who loves me with all her heart. Yet, in spite of her friendship, she chatters all day long on political affairs, and is, in consequence, ever on the point of scratching my eyes out, so much does she suspect the tainted air of Paris of turning me somewhat from the true interests of our class. She is so furious at the malcontents that, had she the power, I verily believe she would take it upon herself to destroy them utterly and annihilate their posterity. Oh ! she is a grand woman ! Not even the snows around us—and you must know we have had the

most terrible weather for a week—have cooled her hot-headedness.

Next week I join the throng of my illustrious colleagues. What fine things we shall have to say ! We shall be at least a thousand nobles at Riom, and we have agreed, in the event of arming, to take kettles for drums, that being the implement of war of the Auvergnats. Better to laugh beforehand, for perhaps in a fortnight we shall not be so gay. God grant that all may pass peacefully, without trouble and discord ; though, indeed, that would rather disconcert those interested in disorder. Let them beware of our arrival in Paris. In spite of my patriotism and zeal, I long to return there, and assuredly you count for something in these wishes of mine. Soften then my hardships, and give me news of you ; you cannot imagine the pleasure it will give me. For old acquaintance' sake, I may be permitted to demand a little friendship, and you owe it me in return for that I have vowed you.

How kind it would be of you, Madame la Comtesse, if you were to get from Monsieur le Prévôt a short account of the nominations in Paris (not his writing, I beg of you), as if it were for yourself, and of what is happening. You should send it me at Clermont, Auvergne.

You can tell my dear uncle the news of my part of the world, which I believe I have given you fully enough. A thousand compliments to your niece [the Marquise de Boissésou]. I sympathise with her grief at being parted from her husband, for she will now be able to pity me for being a hundred leagues from my dear friend. Nor do I wish to be forgotten by Madame La Neuville, and I beg her to tell her daughter that I have seen no one in my province as pretty as she. Should you see the Baron d'Escars, a word for me ; may he pray for my return ! And my cousin the Ambadress [the Countess de Souza] who has a grudge against me for not having been able to see her before I went. Make my peace for me ; my mind is at ease if you take the matter in hand.

Farewell, Madame la Comtesse ; how it grieves me to leave you. In paying you my respects, permit me to kiss the thumb of your left hand ; I have thought it charming. How disagreeable it is to be far from those by whose side one would be, and to be forced to put an end to a conversa-

tion. With these sentiments, I have the honour to be, etc., etc., etc. I should never finish if I told you all I thought.¹

On May 4, 1789, the eve of the opening of the States-General, Madame Du Barry probably witnessed from a window at Versailles the imposing procession of the Deputies of the three Estates. But the understanding between the King and the people could not last long, and events were precipitated, as is only too well known; June 20 was the day of the Tennis-court oath, the 23rd that of the *lit-de-justice*, when the sovereignty of the nation rose threateningly before the power of the monarch. The arrival of the troops at Versailles and the dismissal of Necker exasperated public opinion, and on the morning of the 14th the people stormed the Bastille. Brissac had not in the least foreseen such violence; and no doubt he said, with Madame Du Barry: "If Louis XV. were alive all this would surely not have happened."²

France was thrown into disorder, filled with a stream of follies, seized with a fury of reprisals; archives were burnt in the towns, châteaux in the country, aristocrats were slain everywhere. After July 14 the Duke de Brissac hastened to his province, which was all afire; he was arrested, and escaped death by a miracle. "Monsieur de Brissac, Governor of Paris, after passing the town of Mans, has been recognised and arrested at Durtal near La Flèche, whence a courier has been dispatched to the capital to discover whether he is guilty, and if he should be beheaded or removed to Paris."³

Political confusion did not, however, interrupt the course of fashionable life. The Countess went as usual to the theatre, called on her friends, entertained at Louveciennes. One of Madame d'Angiviller's charming letters takes us there:

Friday, June 12, 1789.

How much we must thank you, Madame la Comtesse, for your kindly recollection of us. The fine weather reminds

¹ The letter was among the documents seized at Louveciennes.

² See the *Souvenirs de Madame Vigée Le Brun*, Vol. I., p. 168.

³ A letter of July 26, 1789, on the happenings in the Maine, quoted by Vatel, Vol. III., p. 123.

us of the charm of your beautiful groves, and of the enjoyment of walking in them with you. But we are indeed grieved that we already have an engagement for a dinner that takes place every Saturday, and which we cannot miss without failing in due respect to Messieurs les Députés. Pray accept our regrets, dear Madame, and convey them to the fair enchantress [Madame Vigée Le Brun], who has no need of her art in making her picture of you full of charm.¹ Should it suit both of you, we shall recompense ourselves for our loss on Saturday by coming next Tuesday at about three o'clock to enjoy that perfection of both art and nature which is to be found at Louveciennes. Be so kind as to let me know if this is possible ; for then we shall have an opportunity of making amends for our omissions, though, indeed, they are quite unintentional. I have the honour to assure you of it, as well as of our eagerness to pay you our sincere and tender respect, Madame la Comtesse.

Pardon all the spots of water on the paper ; by them you may know that I am in my bath, and that the desire to answer you as soon as possible kept me from waiting until I came out of this humid dwelling where I spend my days.²

Madame Du Barry could not be so light of heart as her friend, for she had been too close a spectator of the management of the affairs of the kingdom not to be passionately interested in the political questions of the day. Her state of mind may be realised from that of de Brissac. The Duke was no less a friend of liberty for being by temperament a strong supporter of the monarchy. The letters he sent his mistress from Anjou were very confident in tone.

" There are here," he wrote after the incident of his arrest, " three or four people who disturb the peace that otherwise reigns over this neighbourhood. The calamitous fact of their existence has to be borne with patience, for liberty is too precious a thing to be sacrificed for the sake of a little ease. Whether we shall be any the better for it, is perhaps doubtful. But happier we should be. Equality, moderation and simplicity conduce to the growth of a tranquillity

¹ Madame Vigée Le Brun was then staying at Louveciennes.

² The letter is now in the National Archives.

that ought to promote humane and polished feeling. . . . Yesterday my birthday was celebrated with much noise and martial display. I felt that my fellow-citizens put their heart into their demonstration of devotion. That the feudal system has been destroyed does not necessarily deprive us of respect and love, a fact that is both good and true."

Madame Du Barry replied in the same manner, and discoursed at large on the humanitarian theories that appealed to her goodness of heart. The Duke again wrote to her :

Angers, *Saturday, August 29.*

I have not yet heard the ministerial news and am expecting it most impatiently. From Versailles I have heard that the letter was waiting to be signed, in which case I shall have it this evening or on Monday.

How learned and philosophical your letter of the 22nd is, Madame la Comtesse ! Indeed, one has need of philosophy and hope, not to speak of patience, when so far away from you, and when the States-General are so slow in their work on the points of real importance, which are expected by the whole of France, and which ought to calm her. She is beginning to be resigned, at least the nobility are. The nation ought to be satisfied with them, and not at all troubled on their account, considering they are without either arms, defence or plans. They say that Paris is not at peace, that, like you, she lacks the means of subsistence. How I wish I could share with you the fine fruit that the beautiful Angevin Ceres has given us this year, but it would be both imprudent and difficult to try and send you them ; the municipalities, too, fear people who are dissatisfied with the necessaries, and want to share the superfluities, of life. But farewell, farewell, Madame la Comtesse ; it is nearly noon, and I am to dine at Brissac. I tender my respect and thanks for the news you send me ; my happiness lies in hearing of you, and in thinking of you and of my sincere and eternal devotion to you. I might have heard from you yesterday, but I did not.

The National Assembly set to work on " the points of real importance," as Brissac desired. After the Declaration of Rights of August 26, they at last turned to the question

of finance ; from the night of the 4th onwards no revenue had been received, as the tax-payers thought the taxes had been abolished. In the meanwhile the Assembly was torn by conflict ; the sovereignty of the nation could not be brought to harmonise with that of the monarch, and the parties that were formed began to question the very principles of government.

Brissac, in his peaceful estate far away from the tumult, felt perhaps a little displeased at not having been elected. The letters of his mistress and his friends kept him informed of all that happened. His replies to the Countess were written in the obscure and inaccurate style that was so significant of the metaphysical tendencies of his time, and so different from the lucid perspicacity of Mirabeau, who made such excellent fun of these tendencies. But in spite of the difficulty of his language, his faith in human nature is made plain, and especially his faith in the love of the woman he adored and had made wholly his.

Brissac, *Saturday, September 5, 1789.*

The posts are truly much too infrequent, Madame la Comtesse, for this letter, which leaves to-morrow by Le Mans, will arrive just as soon as yesterday's, that went by the mail. But the pleasure of holding converse with you is an opportunity not to be lost. Yes, the future is as disheartening as the present. As long as reason, which is man's fairest heritage, does not yield the place to wit, ambition or vanity, what man does not desire happiness for himself and others, unless he is a madman, of whom I fear there are too many ! But of people who work for the majority of the nation . . . that unfortunately neither knows nor has the means of enjoying the charm of true happiness . . . of such men as have enough frank loyalty to agree to arrangements that are to the advantage of all, how many have we ? Very few, or else they are not heard, or they do not speak, or they do not exist. What melancholy feelings do these reflections arouse !

The Duke quickly turned to less serious matters. As Madame Du Barry had told him of the opening of the Salon, he was reminded of their old friend, Vien, who was exhibiting

his *Love fleeing from slavery*. The rather old-fashioned allegory represented Cupid flying from a cage, which had been imprudently opened by a woman :

Love departing and fleeing from his slavery is not my emblem, Madame la Comtesse, though it may well be suited to my age. . . . By the way, I have heard that the picture is unfavourably criticised, and that it is cold and correct, but not very attractive. I agree, to some extent, with the critic, but the detail and finish of the picture, as well as its colouring, are good, and will always ensure it having charm. No woman will apply to herself the insults offered the sex by Love, or rather by the painter, who, considering his age and his works, has every right to be cold. I suppose there were very few portraits, especially by Madame Le Brun, who painted the one of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans. She is made for the love and esteem of all, and can appear in public at any time. Is the Salon beautiful? I do not think many country people have been there. Besides, for a long time it has not been worth the trouble of moving.

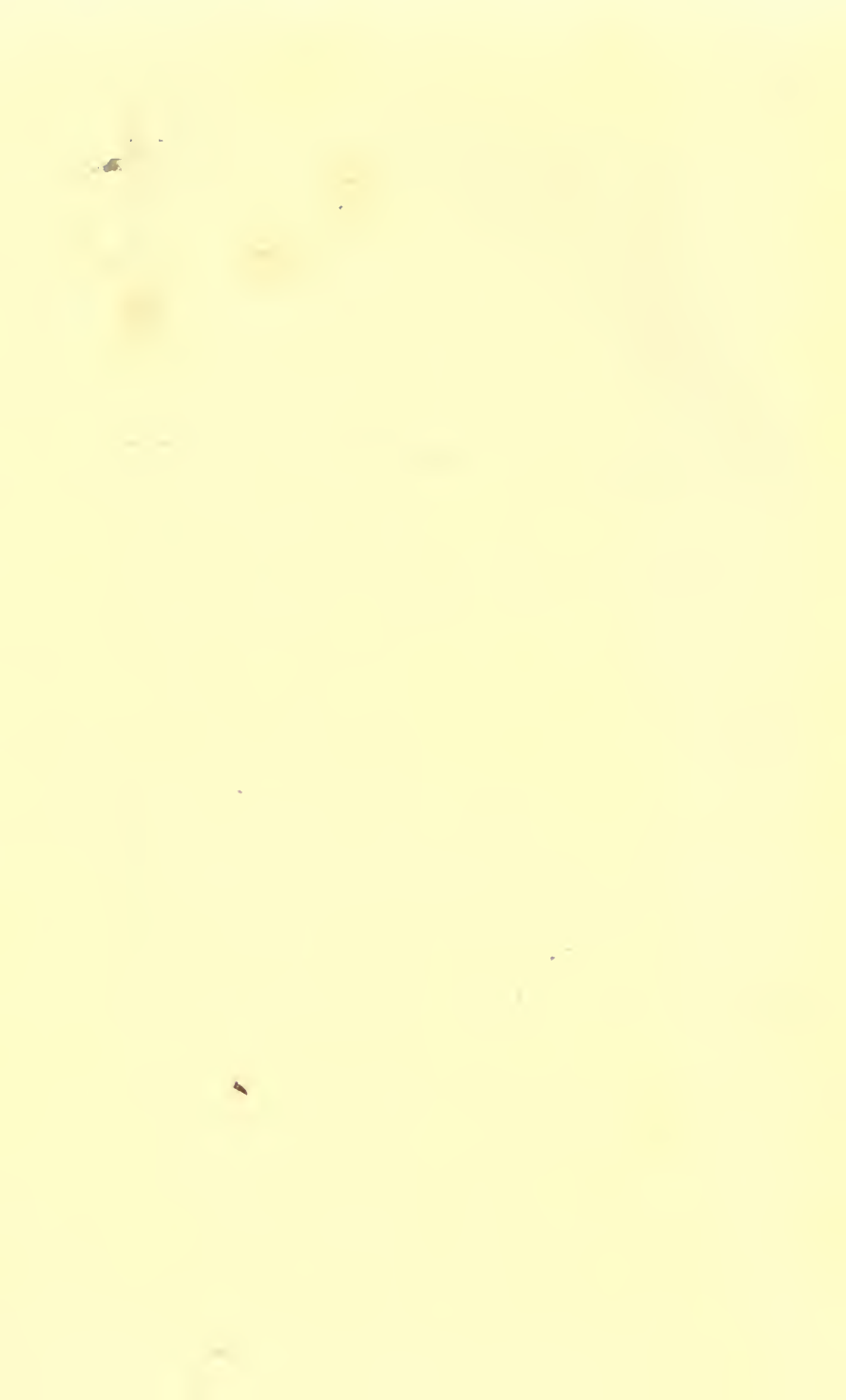
After alluding to a visit of the Countess to her dear friends, the nuns of Pont-aux-Dames, de Brissac concludes his letter as he began it, with a mixture of affection and politics.

Unlike the "country people," Madame Du Barry had not failed to visit the Exhibition at the Louvre, for in spite of the anxious times she was still deeply interested in art. No longer was the charming image of the Countess to be seen on the walls of the Salon, but this same month she had a portrait painted for the Duke, the third that Madame Vigée Le Brun made of her. "I began it about the middle of September, 1789," said the artist. "From Louveciennes we heard the cannonade in the distance. I had painted the head and outlined the bust and arms, when I was obliged to make an expedition to Paris. I hoped to be able to return to Louveciennes in order to finish my work; but . . . my terror had become excessive, and I thought only of leaving France."

The picture, which was completed later, represents Madame Du Barry seated at the foot of a tree, with an open



MADAME DU BARRY
From a painting by Madame Vigée Le Brun, 1789



book in her lap. She is very simply dressed in a green frock, whose high waist already foreshadowed the coming fashion. The cut of the bodice allows a glimpse of her full figure ; the sleeves of the little embroidered vest cover her beautifully rounded arms to the elbows. She was then forty-six, and still very fair under her white veil, and very attractive, retaining all her youthful charm, though she had lost something of her slenderness and her fresh complexion.¹ Her expressive face is still alive to every emotion, but though her half-closed eyes are as mockingly tender as ever, the delicate lips betray a gentle sadness, so nearly breaking into a smile that one cannot but be softened. The picture is not in Madame Le Brun's most brilliant style ; it lacks her characteristic ruffled silks and falling lace, and the clear colours delicately manipulated to the verge of affectation. But though the lady in green is painted without frippery, the artist, with the wisdom that comes with years, has at least endeavoured to portray a soul.

The soul was that of a woman who at this time trembled for the life of him she loved. The great name of de Brissac had marked out the Duke as an object of popular hatred, and already the revolutionary papers were urging his death. Nor did his mistress escape attack from the very first. The obscene *Petit Journal du Palais Royal* printed the following on September 15, 1789 :

SALE OF HORSES AND CARRIAGES.

The Countess Du Barry, widow of the King Louis XV.

This infamous Messalina wishes to sell half-a-dozen old horses, for the sake of getting a young colt, which the Prince de Beauvau has procured for her.

Necker's return to power seemed for a moment to have restored to the monarchy some of its authority, but the King was influenced by the serried ranks of privilege about

¹ " She had become somewhat stout," wrote the Count d'Espin-chal, " and her face was a little pitted, but she was still most attractive when I last saw her in 1789. She owes her charm largely to the most scrupulous attention to cleanliness, and to her habit of taking a daily cold bath, whatever the season and the weather."

the throne, and continued to refuse his sanction of the decrees of August 4 and 26. Reactionary feeling was manifested in the recall of the Flanders Regiment, and in the military banquet given in honour of the Body-Guards, and these two circumstances were directly responsible for the tragic events of October. At the very time when the Royal Family was being brought back to Paris by the mob, two of the Guards, Marion de Barchon-Monteil and Lefebvre de Lukerque, who had escaped the massacre, but not without being wounded, dragged themselves from Versailles to Louveciennes in the hope of finding a refuge and the care they needed with its mistress.¹ Lafont d'Aussonne has told how the Queen "sent some gentlemen in her confidence to Louveciennes with her warmest thanks. The Countess Du Barry immediately had the honour of replying to the Queen in words which I shall quote, having heard them from one of her relatives :

Madame,—The two wounded youths only regret they did not die with their comrades for a Princess as perfect and worthy of all honour as Your Majesty. . . . Luciennes is yours, Madame, for do I not owe my renewed possession of it to your goodwill and kindness? . . . Influenced by some sort of presentiment, the late King compelled me to accept thousands of precious things before sending me away from him. I had the honour of offering you this treasure at the time of the Notables, and I do so again, Madame . . . ; allow me, I implore you, to render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's.

I am, Your Majesty's most faithful servant and subject,
La Comtesse Du Barry." ²

¹ There is a tradition in the Lukerque family to the effect that the Chevalier de Lukerque owed his safety to a woman, who was evidently Madame du Barry.

² *Mémoires secrets et universels des malheurs et de la mort de la Reine de France*, Paris, 1824. The wording of the letter is certainly garbled, but the anecdote is based on fact. This was the time when Madame Du Barry tried to sell some of her diamonds at Amsterdam, as may be seen from a detailed receipt from the bankers, Vandenyver, dated November 21, 1789; the sale realised 133,000 livres. Her generous intentions, at least, have been confirmed by the Count d'Espinhal.

What remained of the Court had left for Paris in order to be near the Royal Family. De Brissac, as Pantler to His Majesty, resided in the Tuileries, but nevertheless went nearly every day to Louveciennes to see his friend. He wrote one evening when he had not been able to pay his visit :

The Tuileries, *Wednesday, November 11, 1789.*

I am going to bed, dear heart, so that to-morrow I may have less of a cold than I have now, and so that I may be better company for you than if I were to come with as much of a cold as I have now. The cold is humoursome, and due to the stagnation of too long a stay in Paris, to which I am far from accustomed ; if I cannot move soon, it will end by killing me or driving me to despair. But I hope for a return, and only do not mention it to you for fear an anticipation of my joy would delay it. Farewell, dear friend, I love you and kiss you a thousand times with the deepest affection of our hearts—my heart, I should say, but shall not cross out what my pen has written, for I love to think that our hearts are for ever one. Farewell till to-morrow. I shall try to sweat and spit, a pleasant prospect, indeed ! The occupation will be less disagreeable, as things are at present, than if the weather were calm and consequently fine. All that happens is nothing but mystery and folly, and the wisest thing we can do is to be together. Farewell, sweet friend, farewell, dear heart. I love you and kiss you.

At Louveciennes the year 1790 passed uneventfully. The life of its mistress was still devoted to her "immense charity throughout the district." She entertained quietly and only a select circle of friends, on account of the troublous times. Madame de Souza and Madame d'Angiviller were often with her, and spent "delightful hours" in her company. Letters from their friends among the *émigrés* were read with curiosity, and a long epistle from Naples, which came that autumn, afforded them an agreeable surprise : "Madame la Comtesse, I have for ages been wanting to recall myself to your recollection and favour. I assure you, I have not forgotten, but I have so little time to

myself. Monsieur Robert must have told you how much I think of you, Madame la Comtesse, and I have often begged him to give me news of you. I am really at Naples, which is a charming place; Nature has rejoiced in beautifying the lovely climate; the skies are pure . . .” In this way Madame Vigée Le Brun filled four pages, describing the scenery and buildings, or telling of her work, in more than doubtful French. “Tell me of Monsieur de Brissac,” she added; “does he remember me? If you should see Madame l’Ambassadrice of Portugal, and the Countess de Brunoy, remember me to them, I beg of you, and assure them of my respectful service.”¹

The news Madame Du Barry received from her brother-in-law was less agreeable. He complained bitterly of her, and importuned her for money, with evidently exaggerated accounts of his poverty. He reminded the Countess of promises made by her steward: “I invoke the word of that honest man, but what use is it to me if your heart is silent. I must then seek to move that, and Monsieur Buffault’s reply will tell me if it still speaks for me.” This, the Roué’s last appeal, was probably left unanswered, for Madame Du Barry’s fortune, like that of many others, must have suffered from the course of events, though it was still considerable. For instance, she applied to the Département of Seine-et-Oise for some slight reduction of taxation. But perhaps the real reason for her economising was the fact that she had already begun to send money abroad for the *émigrés*.

Though the Duke de Brissac was looked on coldly by the Royal Family as well as by the Assembly, he was quite prepared to sacrifice himself for what he believed to be his honour and his duty. Madame Du Barry followed him in his path of self-denial; suffering always touched her heart, and with compassionate kindness she pitied and relieved the miseries of the people, as they well knew. But now she was wanted elsewhere to help in another way. She was

¹ Monsieur de Nolhac has given a facsimile of this letter in his book *Madame Vigée le Brun*.

prudent only for others, with the unconscious, heedless courage that refuses to look at danger. Soon she learnt how to circumvent the police and, without exciting suspicion, used to hold meetings of the Royalist conspirators in her three Parisian *pièds-à-terre*, whose existence was one day to be revealed before the Revolutionary Tribunal. She was already in constant communication with the *émigrés*, and the last three years of her life she dedicated to her friends, carrying her devotion even to the point of dying for them.

The aristocrats continued to leave the country, and at first the chief centre of emigration was Turin. There the Count d'Artois with difficulty maintained a suite of eighty-two persons, for he was nearly penniless. His dream was to induce Europe to arm against France, and he redoubled his importunate requests to the various sovereigns. His negotiations were beset with further difficulties owing to the disagreement at the Tuileries, where the King and Queen rightly feared the blundering politics of their younger brother. News was always impatiently expected at Turin. In August there arrived Monsieur Prioreau, who was attached to the household of the Count d'Artois. He brought accounts of Madame Du Barry's movements that Monsieur d'Espinchal immediately noted down in his diary :

I cannot pass over in silence what Monsieur Prioreau has told us of the Countess Du Barry. The lady, who lives in retirement at Luciennes, has, ever since the beginning of the Revolution, given expression to very Royalist sentiments, and it is known for a fact that she has turned some precious possessions into money, which sum of 500,000 livres is to be used in the service of the King and Queen should they ever have need of it. This action should lead to a better knowledge and a more lenient judgment of one whom calumny has so cruelly attacked.

The Count d'Artois had just left Turin for Venice, to the great joy of his father-in-law, Amadeus of Savoy, when the Countess received an unsigned letter from her friend d'Espinchal. The postmark was from Turin; the black

seal was two doves with the motto: *Vivons unis*. These lines from an *émigré*, though written with careful restraint, show, as nothing else can, how great from the first was the ex-favourite's compassion for those whom misfortune had exiled. The esteem and even admiration which she won from the Count prove with what ardour she espoused their cause, and how she taxed her ingenuity in their service.

Turin, in Piedmont, *January 18, 1791.*

After eighteen months absence and silence can you permit an exile, Madame la Comtesse, to remind you of his existence? Nothing has lessened my devotion to you, *but much has happened to increase my respect*. I need scarcely tell you that, although I may not have written to you, I have, nevertheless, thought very much of you; and always, when I have asked for news of you, *I have heard of actions on your part of which all who were acquainted with you knew you were capable, but which are in these times none the less to be admired*. But I shall spare your modesty and stop. Let me only tell you that your grandson ¹ has been informed of all, as well as those who share his fate, and whom I have so far accompanied.

Since my departure in July, 1789, my wife has sometimes had the pleasure of seeing you with her friend from Poland.² While I was crossing Germany and Switzerland in good company, she was preparing to leave for my estate with our children; she promised to write to you, but has not done so, for which she is sorry. In my château she had to put up with so much vexation that she left during February for Turin, and there awaited my return from Italy, where I had been travelling since November, 1789, after having left everyone else settled for the winter, for I foresaw what an inactive life they would be compelled to lead. And after having seen Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples, Tintoretto's Ascension at Venice, and Milan, I rejoined my wife on July 1. Since then I have not left this place, where I continually meet a great number of my countrymen, whose inconsiderate zeal will no doubt cost us dear, its effects, so far, having been anything but happy. Moreover, your

¹ The "grandson" so discreetly alluded to is no other than the Count d'Artois.

² The Princess Alexandra Lubomirska.

grandson has gone, leaving his wife and children ¹ in the care of his father-in-law. The boys are delightful, their good-nature leaves nothing to be desired, and their feeling and intelligence are all that could be wished, especially the younger one's, who, by the way, has scarcely grown at all, while the elder is much taller. I hope you will soon have particulars about all this, through some honest man whom we may see.

Your grandson has thus decided to make this journey and fulfil the obligations he has for long owed to both love and friendship. He is at present in Venice; and where he intends to go afterwards I do not know. His cousin ² left this week with his children by a very different route, and they will be in Berne from the 15th to the 18th. I do not know if they will be satisfied with dreaming of Switzerland. I trust they conduct themselves prudently and do not compromise their affairs. As for us, we do not think the season suitable for crossing the Alps. As I, moreover, fear finding myself face to face on the way with that villain Necker, who is intriguing in Geneva, I have decided to stay and pay court to the fair Piedmontese, of whom a considerable number in all classes are pretty. As usual, I know everyone and should spend a very pleasant winter, were it not for hearing of misfortunes that affect us ourselves, or afflict our friends, news that would continually disturb the moments of peace and pleasure one hoped to enjoy. Such a moment, and a very sweet one, you would give me, if you would answer my letter and give me news of your health, as to which we have suffered some anxiety.

Be careful to have your letter franked, and send it to Turin in my name, which I think you will guess without much trouble. Having worn the same uniform as Lolo, you have known me for a long time, and if, as is my way, I keep away from people in their time of glory, my desire to give expression to my esteem for them, my consideration and devotion, is all the greater at times when these sentiments are a homage that is their due. Farewell then, Madame la Comtesse. I await news of you, and any mission with which you may charge me, I shall zealously carry out.³

¹ The Duke d'Angoulême and the Duke de Berry.

² The Prince de Condé.

³ The letter is followed by a postscript that refers to M. Pelletier's

In the night of January 11 Madame Du Barry was robbed of her wonderful caskets. On that night Monsieur de Brissac gave a great entertainment at his hôtel in Paris. His mistress was present and stayed with the Duke until the next day. The thieves took advantage of her absence, and broke into the house through the bedroom window, which they reached by means of two ladders. They broke a chest of drawers and a writing-table, and seized several other things of value besides the jewel-box.¹

The theft, or at least the story of it that was told the day after, was extraordinary. The valet, whose duty it was to guard the treasure, was said to have slept away from the house, and the young soldier, who should have watched in the gardens, to have deserted his post. The latter, a Swiss Guard, of the detachment garrisoned at Courbevoie, was accused of having followed some unknown men to an inn, where he had been left by them in a drunken condition. As a matter of fact, the whistling of one of the accomplices had alarmed him and taken him away from the château. Next morning the servants noticed the injuries to the furniture and the disappearance of the casket. Madame Du Barry was speedily informed and returned at once.

On January 11 an official report of the crime was drawn up and a judicial enquiry opened.² The Countess called her principal jeweller, the Sieur Roüen, who gave a full

arrival at Chambéry, and adds that "the State of Naples refused permission to enter for fear of the new French evil; while all Italy was full of distinguished strangers, especially Rome, Venice, Genoa, and Florence. There were 200 at Chambéry."

¹ See Coüard, *Le vol des diamants de Madame Du Barry*, Vol. I., p. 37, and M. Henri Welschinger's *Les bijoux de Madame Du Barry*, which latter was unknown to both Vatel and Coüard. Monsieur Paul Fromageot has made a complete study of the theft, which he communicated in 1908 to the Society of Moral Sciences of Seine-et-Oise (*Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles*, Vol. x, pp. 257-285).

² All the documents have been preserved in the Archives of Seine-et-Oise. The young Swiss was accused of complicity and imprisoned at Rueil. His case at once excited the interested pity of the journalist Prudhomme, who in his *Révolutions de Paris*, gave a malicious account of the theft at Louveciennes, and used the opportunity to attack the Countess.

account of the stolen things, and also wrote the leaflet describing them, of which a large number was printed.

"Two thousand louis to be won, and a reasonable reward according to the value of the things returned."

"Madame Du Barry has been robbed of the diamonds and jewels described below, at the château of Louveciennes called Luciennes, near Marly, on the night of January 10 :

" . . . A ring set with an oblong white brilliant weighing about 35 grains . . . ; a green box for rings in the shape of a rosette, containing twenty to twenty-five rings, of which one set with a large emerald . . . ; one with an onyx representing a portrait of Louis XIII., whose hair and moustaches are of sardonyx ; one of a Cæsar in two colours, surrounded with brilliants . . . one of a Bacchus engraved in relief on a cornelian ; one of a yellow sardonyx, engraved by Barrier, representing Louis XIV., and surrounded by some worthless Dutch diamonds ; one of a large heart-shaped sapphire, surrounded by diamonds with which half the ring is also set. . . . This box also contains an antique lucky charm, engraved on an onyx ; two very fine brilliants for earrings . . . ; a finely mounted rose-shaped cluster of 258 white brilliants, of which a large one in the middle weighing about twenty-four grains . . . ; a pair of shoe-buckles of eighty-four brilliants ; two fine sets of large brilliants valued at 120,000 livres . . . ; a double rope of pearls with pendant, consisting of about two hundred pearls each weighing about four or five grains ; a large brilliant at the top of the pendant weighing twenty-five to twenty-six grains, and at the bottom a fringed tassel and a knot all set with finely mounted brilliants ; a pair of bracelets of six rows of pearls . . . ; the clasp of the bracelet is an emerald surmounted by a monogram in diamonds of two L's in the first, and a D and a B in the second, and two padlocks of four brilliants ; a rope of one hundred and four pearls . . . ; a portrait of Louis XV. painted by Massé, surrounded by a frame of laurel leaves ; the said portrait from five to six inches high ; another portrait of Louis XV. painted by the same

“ Two gold chandeliers, in the shape of torches mounted on two golden shafts, enamelled with lapis lazuli, and surmounted by two silver turtledoves, and by quivers and arrows, made by Durand ; a gold case enamelled in green, at the end of which is a little watch made by Romilly, surrounded by four rows of diamonds, and on the back a coat of arms ; sixty-four bezils in a single thread forming a collar, of finely mounted diamonds, each weighing eight, nine or ten grains . . . ; a portrait of Louis XIV. by Petitot ; . . . a writing-case of superb old lacquer work, enriched with gold, and containing gold writing requisites . . . ; two little silver toilette candlesticks, with pearls and a crest ; a box of rock crystal contained in another pierced box ; Portuguese gold coins ; Spanish guineas and half guineas ; a medal of the Noailles ; others of Louis XV., in each corner of which are fleurs de lys ; others by Monsieur Bignon, by Monsieur de la Michodière, and by Monsieur Caumartin with the arms of Paris ; one of the Regency . . . Two lorgnettes, one enamelled in blue, the other in red with the portrait of the late King, both gold-mounted. A reliquary of about an inch, of very pure gold, enamelled in black and white, and set with a little cross . . . ”

This list is but a portion of the dazzling mass of things stolen from the Countess ; her caskets enshrined the exquisite art of eighteenth century jewellery, with its splendour of diamonds and purity of pearls.

The notice caused a great sensation, but many refused to believe in the folly of making a display at this time, when the wisest thing the nobility could do was to seek to be forgotten. Madame Du Barry should have done so more than all, because the people's accumulated hatred of abuses had added much to the legend that had grown about her, and Marat himself, their oracle, undertook to instruct the readers of the *Ami du peuple* on the subject.¹

¹ “ Know that what the National Assembly costs the State during a whole year, is not a quarter of what one of his favourite hussies cost that old sinner, Louis XV. Look how he knuckled under to Julienne (*sic*), the Du Barry who used to walk in the mud of the streets. Ah ! if you had seen her twenty years ago, covered with

The diamond robbery was followed by an outbreak of threats directed against her; she was denounced for her great riches, "which we know well how she acquired," as the journal, *Les Révolutions de Paris* wrote; the author continued with a remark, summing up the rumours current in Louveciennes and Marly, that gave some rise to anxiety in more than one quarter. "One need not hesitate to cast some doubt on the truth of the theft; owing to the threat of a considerable reduction of her income, the said lady is supposed to have been inspired with the notion of making herself interesting by letting herself be thought to be the victim of an afflicting mishap, thus securing for herself a claim to the indulgence of the inexorable National Assembly." From the beginning, therefore, Madame Du Barry's neighbours were suspicious of the incident. Many were of the opinion that the theft was an invention, among whom were Zamore and Salanave; and later these two servants of the Countess gave evidence to that effect before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

It is strange that Parker Forth, the English agent, should have been concerned in the affair from the outset. He kept up a close correspondence with Madame Du Barry, and paid her frequent visits, once even staying the night with her. His appearance on the scene complicates the story still more, for at this time he was playing a most perplexing part in France. England was by no means ignorant or innocent of the first revolutionary outbreaks. Among the crowd of agents, said to be in the pay of Pitt and sent by him to stir up the people of Paris, Forth was from the earliest thought to be the most formidable. On June 8, 1789, a secretary of the Marquis de la Luzerne, Louis XVI.'s Ambassador in London, wrote to warn his government against the actions of this dangerous spy:

The recent tumults in France are looked on with approval

diamonds! Marry! you should have seen her in the château of Versailles, or pouring out the golden louis of the nation by basketfuls into the hands of her thieving relatives. . . ." (*L'Ami du Peuple*, No. 277, November 11, 1790, *Discours aux infortunés.*)

here [in London], and further insurrection is hoped for. The Sieur Forth, who has already been in France, at the opening of the States-General, and who spent a fortnight in London, disappeared a few days ago, and is said to be in the country. England does not set much store by a few thousand pounds sterling for bribing an incendiary or so, by indirect means. If there are any people of that description in France and Monsieur Forth is there too, he is certainly concerned in the intrigue. He always takes these subordinate parts, and is all the more to be feared because he does not lack ability.¹

Such was the man who directed all Madame Du Barry's movements, and who placed himself at her disposal both in London and Paris in such a way that it is difficult to tell when he was acting for her and when fulfilling his rôle as secret agent. Naturally he was soon accused of having engineered the Louveciennes robbery himself.² "Whatever the trouble may be," said Greive, the implacable accuser of the Countess, "this mysterious robbery has given her an excuse for making several journeys to London, of which the two Courts have apparently taken advantage to send each other information, etc., without committing the crime of emigration. . . . Such art and foresight are indeed worthy of one schooled by that profound master of Machiavellism, Forth."

The judicial proceedings against the unknown thieves were continued at Versailles as in Paris. All the Jewish receivers of stolen goods were worried. But the Countess

¹ Forth's political rôle both before and during the emigration should be studied. The papers preserved by his family prove that he lent the Princes sums of money which they never repaid.

² One of Forth's letters is annotated by Greive as follows, in Madame Du Barry's *dossier*: "Proof of her intrigues with Forth, the famous English spy, who has intrigued against France ever since 1777, when Franklin was here, but especially since the Revolution. . . . This is the Forth who presumably planned with her the sham theft of diamonds at Louveciennes, to give her an excuse for her journeys to London. Never was plot more deeply contrived. Read Brissac's instructions to her, [?] and note the people she saw in London." Forth's papers, as well as those of her trial, are sufficient to render the theory of a previously planned theft untenable.

remained outwardly calm and continued to live her life as before. Brissac wrote her the following affectionate little letter alluding to her misadventure :

Wednesday, February 2, 1791.

Come, dear heart, and take every precaution for the safety of your plate and other precious things, if you have any left. Yes, with you and your beauty, your kindness and your magnanimity, I am quite unnerved, and feel weaker even than you. And why should I not be so, when I feel so lively an interest ? Farewell, and come soon. Is your arrival known ? Did you not tell me that you would have a supper-party this evening for ten or twelve people ? Give me your commands quickly by the messenger, who will at once return. Everything will be ready so that your orders may be carried out. Farewell, I love you and embrace you with all my heart. Till to-night.

Forth had the thieves arrested in London, and Madame Du Barry heard the news on February 15 ; they were three foreign Jews and one Frenchman, who wore the uniform of the National Guard and said he was a broker.¹ They maintained that they had bought the diamonds in Paris, but found no means of proving their statement. The lawsuit began, but was full of delays and complications and dragged out for an interminable length of time. Madame Du Barry's heirs tried later, but in vain, to regain possession of the " diamonds, pearls and jewels " ² in London, that had been enumerated by her jeweller Roüen, the chief witness in the case, who had accompanied her on her journeys.

Forth informed the Countess that her presence in England was necessary for the identification of the stolen goods. She immediately left France, accompanied by the aged

¹ Archives of Seine-et-Oise. Besides the informer J. B. Levet, the thieves were one Harris, called Abraham, Simon Joseph, Jacob Moses, and Joseph Abraham. They were accused by the great London diamond-merchant Leon, called Simon, who saw Forth on February 10.

² "Supposed to be stolen," said Roüen, as if he doubted the reality of the theft in his declaration on " the 9th day of the 2nd decade of year 2 of the Republic."

Chevalier d'Escourre, the Duke de Brissac's aide-de-camp,¹ a waiting-woman, two footmen, one valet, and the jeweller Rouën. At Calais she was joined by Forth, and on February 19 they left Boulogne.² She stayed in London in an hotel in Jermyn Street, kept by Grenier, the Duke d'Orléans' former cook.

"Madame du Barry is come over to recover her jewels, of which she has been robbed," wrote Horace Walpole to Miss Berry on February 26, 1791, "not by the National Assembly, but by four Jews who have been seized here and committed to Newgate." And he added: "Though the late Lord Barrymore acknowledged her husband to be of his noble blood, will she own the present Earl for a relation, when she finds him turned strolling player?"

The Countess saw very few people during this first stay in London; but Madame de Calonne and Forth scarcely ever left her, according to Blache, a French spy, who kept careful watch on her movements, much to her future harm. She was summoned to appear before the Lord Mayor, and affirmed on oath that the diamonds were hers. Boyde, the Lord Mayor, Walpole wrote, was "a little better bred than Monsieur Bailly," and "made excuses for being obliged to administer the oath *chez lui*, but begged she would name her hour; and, when she did so, he fetched her himself in his state-coach, and had a Mayoral banquet ready for her."³

¹ The Chevalier d'Escourre lost his life because of this journey, and the ones after it, for he was executed as Madame Du Barry's accomplice.

² An autograph note by Madame Du Barry on her journeys to England, quoted by Vatel. Forth kept a diary which is in the possession of his family. We have kindly been allowed to make extracts relevant to the affair of the theft: "February 11, long letter to Mr. Rouen, giving a circumstantial account of the recovery of Madame Du Barry's Diamonds.—15. Confession of Harris.—16. Set off to Dover.—17. Arrive Boulogne at 9, Madame Du Barry at 10 night.—18. Letter to Rouen.—19. Cross to Dover.—21. Dine Du Barry, Consultation at Baldwins.—22. Meeting at Ham. Dine D. B.—24. Examination of prisoners."

³ Some days later Walpole corrected his information; the Lord Mayor had not fetched the Countess in his coach, but only kept her to dinner.

The Countess left London with Forth on March 1, her lawsuit not even opened, and on the 4th she was back at Louveciennes.¹ Had she already some commission to carry out, and if so for which party? The policy of the Count d'Artois now deviated from that of the Tuileries, for the Queen was strongly opposed to the proceedings of her brother-in-law's counsellors, Condé and Calonne. Was Madame Du Barry given instructions by the wife of the latter? Was she the bearer of information for the Royal Family, who had been contemplating flight ever since the civil Constitution of the Clergy? It is impossible to suggest any kind of answer to these questions. On April 4, a month after her return, Madame Du Barry again left for England, with a passport which she obtained from the minister Montmorin.

She said that she went to unravel a difficulty that had arisen in her lawsuit. What is certain is that she was provided by the counter-revolutionary bankers Vandenyver,² of Paris, with an unlimited letter of credit on Messrs. P. Simon and J. Hankey of London. Her presence did not prevent the release of the thieves, while her jewels were sealed up and deposited in a bank.³

On the other hand, her intercourse with Forth and the *émigrés* was closer than ever. That she was the bearer of correspondence is shown by the following unsigned letter, which escaped her destruction of the papers that might compromise her. She received it, on the eve of her departure, from Monsieur d'Angiviller, who still officiated as Director of the Office of Works, but who was arranging to leave France in consequence of threatened danger :

¹ The dates noted by the Countess may be verified by reference to Forth's journal: "March 1. Set off Dover at 9 with Madame Du Barry, arrive at 7.—4. Arrive at Paris, Hôtel Brissac, at 10."

² The bankers had dealt with the Countess since 1789, contrary to the declaration made by the elder Vandenyver, in his evidence, on the 11th Brumaire, Year II.

³ The bank was that of Messrs. Ransom, Morland and Hammers, Pall Mall.

April 13.

I am in despair at not being able to wait on Madame la Comtesse for her commands. But I am expected elsewhere, and it is quite impossible for me to have the honour of seeing her. My wife's prayers and mine follow her on her path and accompany her return. Will she be so kind as to take charge of this letter? There is no address, but Madame la Countess knows to whom it should be delivered.

I beg her to accept my most sincere and devoted homage.¹

The secret letter confided to her care was for Madame de Calonne. During this second stay, which was very short, she lived in Margaret Street, near Oxford Circus. She was made very welcome, and in the drawing-rooms of the exiles joined gatherings that were a France in miniature, with all the graceful elegance of that country. Vandenyver's letter of credit made it possible for her to buy two English horses, as well as to exercise liberality on many occasions which find no mention in her accounts. She returned to France on the 21st, only to leave for England again two days later; an express which she received on the very night of her arrival forced her immediately to retrace her steps.

Though the Countess may have meddled with politics when abroad, her amusements were not allowed to suffer; but for a few days after her arrival she was compelled to keep her room owing to the effects of the crossing. Her indisposition is referred to in a note to Mrs. Boydell, the Lady Mayoress.

Monday, April 25.

The Countess Du Barry has the honour to send the Lady Mayoress her compliments, and to express her regret at not being able to be present at her dinner-party, which she would have much enjoyed. The Countess Du Barry has waited until now in the hope that the pain in her throat, from which she suffers, would be gone; but she sees with concern that

¹ Madame Du Barry's examination makes it possible to identify this letter. Monsieur d'Angiviller was attacked on the subject of his administration, honest though it was, and left France during the following month. He went to Italy and ended his life in Hamburg; his wife could not decide to follow him, and stayed at Versailles, where she died in 1808.

she must abstain from the pleasure of seeing the Lady Mayoress to-day. The Countess Du Barry begs My Lady to remember her to the Lord Mayor.

The Countess turned to various people for help in her affairs. She obtained a recommendation to the Lord Chancellor ; she wrote to Lord Hawkesbury, who obligingly placed himself at her service, but did not conceal from her that the laws of his country " forbade any judge, even the Chancellor himself, to interfere with the actual course of a trial." Otherwise she did not permit her troubles to disturb the agreeable life she chose to lead. It was not long before she took part in all entertainments and receptions. She saw the Tower and Westminster, attended divine services in St. Paul's Cathedral, danced at Vauxhall, and was seen at Ranelagh, which was " among the most striking gardens to be seen in Europe."

She entertained several Englishmen and *émigrés* at dinner and card-parties. She was on the best of terms with Mrs. Hobart, who was soon to become Countess of Buckinghamshire ; she visited Sans-souci, the country house of this fair lady, who was said to have made " as many conquests as the King of Prussia." She became an intimate friend of Mrs. Sturt, to whom she sent later the most delightful letters, full of sweet memories, that led to charming answers telling her how much London had appreciated her " wit and good-humour."

Towards the end of June, Madame Du Barry witnessed the arrival of her friend Calonne, whom the Count de Provence had sent from Coblenz, to ask Pitt for help or at least for his neutrality. This was after the flight to Varennes, and the King's brothers, being again united, dreamt only of seeing France invaded by confederated Europe ; there was little to be won from England, who would have nothing to do with the struggle unless she could thereby further her own interests. But the affair in which Madame Du Barry intervened was of less importance than the Revolutionary Tribunal thought, even though she probably placed her improvised salon and her English connections at the

service of Monsieur de Calonne while he was carrying out his task.

Madame Du Barry stayed on in London after his departure, and during this time Cosway, the great miniature-painter, made the last known portrait of her. She looks small and dainty in spite of her age, because of the heavy ringlets framing her face ; the expression of her long blue eyes is caressing, the lips are pouted for a kiss. She is wearing a white dress, which is only sketched in, and has a collar of rose pearls about her neck. How little does her face show of the torment she had endured ! Indeed she lived only for the moment ; the past weighed lightly on her, and the future gave her no anxiety, for she had the serenity and the calmness of those who are always adored.

In Paris, meanwhile, Monsieur de Brissac longed for her, and perhaps trembled for the life of his love ; she too dreamt of her dear home, and her eagerness to return may be divined from the pressing commands she gave her servants.¹ At last she arrived, on August 25, 1791, escorted, as ever, by Forth,² whom, imprudent that she was, she had no fear

¹ These letters of the month of July, quoted by the Goncourts and Vatel, are full of instructions to Morin, and the other servants. " I am miserable enough in being far from my home and my friends in a country which, whatever one may say, does not equal what France was before the disturbances that trouble her. I approve of Morin's plan to put my things in safety ; he should ask the Duke's advice, but carefully so that no one may suspect. . . . Morin must tell Mademoiselle Roussel to put all my lace, which is in the cupboard in the chapel, in a trunk together with all that can be stolen or burnt, so that they may be safe from all kinds of attack. . . . I hope we shall not be reduced to such extremity, but we must be prepared for all. With extreme grief I realise that I must stay here until August 14, because my rascal thieves will not be judged until the end of the month. . . ." She thought of all the minute affairs of Louveciennes, of all the little debts to be dealt with by Morin, concerning which she wrote that " the Duke had sent him the money for paying them off." She asked that Madame de Voungny, for whom Brissac was to procure a passport, should be given bottles of essence of vulnerary, of orange-flowers, of cherry-blossom, and " some of my pots of preserves, made last year, if there are any left. . . ." to bring her in England.

² Madame Du Barry admitted her return with Forth, in her examination. In Forth's diary may be read : " August 25. Arrive



MADAME DU BARRY
From a miniature by Cosway

of allowing to stay with her. But what changes had Paris known since her departure ! what tide of mad happenings that nothing now could stem ! Brissac had lost all illusion and in his heart already mourned the end of royalty.

Madame Du Barry rejoiced to find herself once more "on the hill" of her long-deserted Louveciennes. And visitors came from every quarter for news of relatives and friends, whom they had thought would be not long away, but whom they now feared that they would not see again until the disturbances were over. The Countess was beloved by all for showing such courage and kindness ; they knew she was once more going to undertake the perilous journey to comfort the exiles and bring them financial help.

In the meanwhile her home was held to be the safest place for their gatherings ; select little dinner-parties were very frequent. The Countess ordered at this time a large marble group of *Beauty disarming Love* for her gardens, and the following note from Monsieur de Brissac written one day after the King had been hunting, is sufficient proof that life at Louveciennes had, in spite of the political activities of its mistress, resumed its peaceful course :

Monday, October 3, 1791.

My little dauphin has gone ; I have no spectacles, so I only write you a single word, which includes all : I love you for ever, in spite of the envious old people. To-morrow I dine with you, and I shall bring Madame de Banville, the Abbé Billiard and Monsieur Le Goust. We rode eight leagues, and the King shot three pheasants ; my breakfast had to serve for dinner too. I love you and embrace you with all my heart. I have just made a blot, for which I beg your pardon. There is no news.

Monsieur Bertrand, formerly Lord-Lieutenant of Rennes, has been appointed Secretary of State for the Navy.

at Paris at 10. 26. See Duke of Brissac. Arrive at Luciennes at 9. 27. See Luciennes. D. Brissac and others dine. 28. *id.*, *id.* 29. Come to Paris." Forth spent September in Paris, in October he went to Versailles to give evidence in the robbery trial ; on November 3 he wrote : " Adieu, D. B. and D. de Brissac, d'Armaillé, etc."

But circumstances kept Madame Du Barry in France for many long months, months of anguish and torment, during which she had heart to think of none but Brissac, whose days were thenceforth numbered. The arrest of the King at Varennes signalled the defeat of the monarchy. The Assembly completed its Constitution and made changes in all administrative and judicial institutions, but allowed the Royal Army to remain in its entirety. Only the military households of the King and Princes were disbanded and were replaced by a Constitutional Guard, independently of the Guard of Honour. This Guard numbered at the most twelve hundred infantry, and six hundred cavalry to be chosen by the King and paid out of the funds of the Civil List.

As the head of this body Louis XVI. appointed the Duke de Brissac, on whose fidelity and bravery he could rely, but to whom the honour was to prove fatal. The Constitutional Guard was suspected from the first of being too devoted to the King. It consisted only of nobles and counter-revolutionaries, who were said to be ready to turn traitor the moment their chief gave the signal. "The Du Barry was given the task of sounding the opinions of those who sought admission to its ranks,"¹ said the persecutors of the Countess, later on. One of them declared before the Revolutionary Tribunal that he had read in a letter that "the new bodyguards were introduced to the Du Barry, so that they might give expression to their devotion to the person of the King."²

No doubt some of the officers, who wanted to serve under the Duke of Brissac, made application to his mistress. A letter found among her papers shows that she was not thought to be without influence.

Versailles, *the 28th.*

We have been playing a game of hide-and-seek, Madame la Comtesse ; I went to Marly partly for the honour of seeing you, and you were away from Luciennes ; I went to Paris

¹ Fouquier-Tinville's notes. Vatel, Vol. III, p. 262.

² Evidence of Blache. Vatel, Vol. III., p. 278.

and sent to the hôtel de Brissac, but you had just started back for Luciennes. I hope you will be so kind as to give me an interview before you leave for England, so that I may for a moment enjoy the pleasure of seeing and hearing you. In the meantime, I should like to give you an opportunity of satisfying your love of doing good by recommending to your notice a man, who has no fortune and a charming wife. The Revolution has made him leave his regiment. His petition will inform you of his desires. I beseech you to be so kind as to use your influence with the Duke de Brissac on his behalf. I shall be infinitely obliged to you.

I have the honour to be, Madame la Comtesse, your most humble and devoted servant,

Du Bourdic, *née* Baronne De l'Estang.

Some dissatisfied members of the regiment soon informed the Legislative Assembly of the Royalist spirit among them, and the number of both signed and anonymous denunciations greatly increased. Suspicion was rife, moreover, for the cause of Louis XVI. had become that of every King, and foreign troops were invading the frontiers. During the sitting of May 29, 1792, the Assembly heard a report by Basire, and declared in consequence that there were grounds of complaint against the Commander-in-Chief of the Constitutional Guard. The corps was forthwith disbanded.

The warrant was issued on the 31st at one o'clock in the morning; the Duke de Brissac was accused of treason and summoned to appear before the High Court sitting at Orleans. "I hastened to inform the King and Queen, who were in bed," wrote the Duke de Choiseul afterwards; "they sent me to Monsieur de Brissac's rooms to propose to him means of flight, and to give him certain confidential advice. He was in bed; I gave him my message, and warned him that he would perhaps be notified of the warrant within two hours, and begged him to take advantage of the time left him. His age and his confidence in his innocence prevented him from accepting; and I must say that the only thing he did was to write a long letter to Madame Du Barry, which he sent to Luciennes by his aide-de-camp,

young Maussabré. His only thought, his only care, were for Madame Du Barry."

We have a relic of these tragic moments in a note, written by Madame Du Barry in passionate haste, before she knew the decision of the Assembly, for the letter was never sent and was found among her papers :

Wednesday, 11 o'clock.

I was seized with mortal terror, Monsieur le Duc, when Monsieur de Maussabré was announced ; he assured me that you were well, and were calm with the tranquillity that comes of a good conscience. But that cannot satisfy me ; I am far from you, and do not know what you intend to do ; you will say you do not know yourself. I shall send the Abbé to find out what happens and what you are doing ; why am I not near you ? I should endeavour to console you with my faithful, tender love. I know you have nothing to fear, if only the assembly is governed by reason and good faith. Farewell, I have no time to write more. The Abbé has come to my room and I want to send him off with all speed. I cannot be calm until I hear what becomes of you. I am certain you have not transgressed in any way in forming the King's Guard, so that I fear nothing for you from that side. Your conduct has been so blameless at the Tuileries that you can be accused of nothing. Indeed, your patriotic actions have been so many that I cannot see what they can find to attack. Farewell. Let me hear from you, and have no doubts as to my feelings.¹

On the morning after his arrest, the Countess read the long farewell love-letter that Brissac wrote to her during the night. Her despair may be imagined. At that very hour the Duke was being transferred to Orleans. For two days she anxiously waited for news, and at last on June 2, a letter came from Monsieur de Maussabré that allayed her terrible misgivings :

¹ Madame Du Barry, when questioned as to this letter during her trial, said she had not sent it, because one of the Duke's men had brought her news of him. The Abbé of whom she spoke was their friend the Abbé Beliard (often called Billiard), formerly a clerk in the Foreign Office.

Paris, *June 2.*

Madame la Comtesse,

I hasten to send you a letter from Monsieur de Brissac, which will inform you that he arrived at his destination without suffering the slightest accident. I should have brought it you myself, if I had not had several important commissions to carry out ; as soon as I have finished them, I shall set out for Luciennes to tell you of several important details which you ought to know. Until then, permit me, Madame la Comtesse, to have the honour of offering you my respects, with which I have the honour to be

Your most humble and obedient servant,

Maussabré.

There was another woman who lived in mortal anxiety for the life of the Duke de Brissac, and that was his daughter, the Duchess de Mortemart, who had heard only of his arrest. She was ill, and far from France, for she had followed her husband when he emigrated, and her separation from her father but aggravated her fears. From Spa, where she was taking the waters, she wrote to Madame Du Barry, whom she already believed to be in Orleans, having perfect faith in her devotion :

June 5.

Do you recognise my writing, Madame, which you have not seen for three years ? That was a sad time when you last saw it, and now the time is even sadder to your friendship and my feelings. Ah ! how I have suffered these last two days ! His courage and firmness, the praise with which he is loaded, the concern he rouses in all, his innocence, nothing can calm my terrified imagination. Monsieur de — and I wanted to leave the day before yesterday, but several people of weight have prevented us. They thought such a step dangerous to my husband, and of no use to my father ; they said that as an *émigré* he might even influence people against him. But I, Madame, could not I be of some service to him ? Can I not hope to see him ? How can they make a crime of a sick woman taking the waters, a crime reflecting on her father ? I do not believe they can, and what else have I to fear ? If you think I can help him in

any way, whether in Paris or at Orleans, be so kind as to tell me, and I fly there. Are there any means of hearing of him, of communicating with him? Tell me, I beseech you, and I will hasten to employ them. A man, whom perhaps you do not know, informs me you have left for Orleans.¹ Do not take it ill if I say that such a sign of devotion to one so dear to me has given you an eternal claim on my heart, and I beg you to accept the assurance of my lifelong regard for you.

I trust that you will excuse my cutting short the compliments that end a letter, and I pray you to grant me the same mark of friendship. I send this letter to some safe person in Paris, who I hope will have it delivered to you without accident. Pardon my scrawl.

Monsieur de Brissac was destined never to see his beloved daughter again. Madame Du Barry replied to her touching letter with the advice not to attempt crossing the frontier. In the meantime the prisoner was kept in solitary confinement until June 14, when the deed of accusation reached the High Court. After that his mistress was allowed to visit him. Every day she sent him a letter by the hands of her coachman, Augustin, and received long replies in return.

The Duke was confined in the old convent of Minimes, rue Illiers, and occupied cell no. 8, Monsieur de Lessart, the ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs, having given it up to him as the most healthy. He was allowed one single servant. "Prisoners are only allowed to receive those who have obtained permission to enter, in their respective rooms," ran one of the prison regulations. There for the last time the Duke de Brissac had the joy of seeing the Countess, for she availed herself more than once of the facilities for travel and permissions to enter that were granted her.

Mesdames de Mortemart and Du Barry felt less anxiety as to the fate of the prisoner, after the King's exhibition of firmness on June 20, 1792. The Royalists seemed to have won certain advantages, and the Duke's beloved daughter wrote to the Countess in more hopeful terms:

¹ The name is obliterated. The dash a little higher up is used instead of M. de Mortemart.

June 23.

I am infinitely grateful to you, Madame, for the news you have been so kind as to give me. As your letter was delayed, I only got it at the same time as one from my father himself, which gave me great joy. I have since learnt that he has been examined, and is no longer kept in solitary confinement, which is as satisfactory as a prisoner may expect. In spite of his acknowledged innocence, I fear the proceedings will take a long time, and I should indeed be happy if I could be of some use or comfort to him during his captivity. For some days we have been anxious about Paris ; people seem to fear further trouble. The Duke of Brunswick's arrival at Coblenz and the money are expected with the same impatience. They said this evening that the French were beaten at Ménin, but I refuse to believe it. Several small detachments are marching there to surround them and cut off their return to France, but they will surely extricate themselves from their position successfully. After your advice and that of several others, I shall continue with my waters, which are most malodorous, and cause both fever and scurvy ; one can but piously believe that they are all for the best, like the foul weather we have had for two months. Above all one must have patience, which is a great remedy. Farewell, Madame, and pardon my scrawls ; be assured of my sincere and life-long devotion.

At Minimes Monsieur de Brissac took an interest in his fellow-captives ; he had the ruined refectory of the old convent fitted up for games of shuttlecock for the amusement of the prisoners. He himself studied geography and had maps bound together for him ; Madame Du Barry sent him books and all that he wished for, by a daily messenger.

At the frontiers the situation was becoming serious, and the Brunswick manifesto violently excited the feelings of the people of Paris. The mob guessed at Louis XVI.'s complicity and bore him even more ill-will than they did the enemy. On August 10 Brissac learnt of the Tuileries massacre and the incarceration of the Royal Family in the Temple ; the news foreshadowed his own early death, and the very same day he made his will. He made Madame de Mortemart sole legatee, and after having set forth his last

wishes as head of the family, he added : " I also earnestly recommend to her a person who is very dear to me, and whom these unfortunate times may place in the greatest distress. I send my daughter a codicil which will inform her of my wishes in the matter." The codicil arranged for all with intuitive foresight :

I give and bequeath to Madame Du Barry, of Louveciennes, in addition to what I owe her, an annual income for life of 24,000 livres, clear and exempt from all charges, or else the revenue and use during her life of my estates of La Rambaudière and Le Graffinière in Poitou, with the furnishing thereof, or else the sum of 300,000 livres paid at once in cash, whichever she may prefer. . . . I beg her to accept this small token of my gratitude and affection, which I owe her all the more because I was the unintentional cause of her losing her diamonds. . . . I beg my daughter to make her accept them . . . , my wish being that all my other legacies should wait until this one has been fulfilled.

Written and signed by my own hand, at Orleans, this 11th day of August, 1792.

Louis-Hercule-Timoléon De Cossé-Brissac.¹

At the same time the Duke wrote the following note to the Countess, who, he knew, would be in despair :

Orleans, *Saturday, August 11.*

I received this morning a most charming letter, and one that has pleased me more than any I have had for a long time. I thank you for it. I kiss you a thousand and a thousand times ; you will indeed be my last thought. We know nothing of the details. I groan, I shudder. Ah ! dear heart ! why am I not alone with you in a desert ? But as I can only be at Orleans, a very wearisome place, I kiss you a thousand and a thousand times. Farewell, dear heart. So far the town is quiet.²

¹ This codicil was brought up later on the occasion of the lawsuit between Madame Du Barry's heirs and those of Cossé-Brissac.

² Greive, who made notes on this letter as on most of the others, underlined Brissac's last phrase, and remarked : " So he was hoping for a disturbance."

The Countess wept at Louveciennes, as did Madame de Mortemart at Spa. Danger seemed imminent ; pamphlets were putting a price on the head of Brissac, " formerly Governor of Paris, formerly Commander-in-Chief of the Du Barry's amusements and of the Royal Guard, and traitor to the nation. . . . A fine windfall indeed for the National High Court ! A reward of 12,000 livres to him who can forestall an accident and make another Saint Denis of Monsieur Timoléon Cossé-Brissac." ¹

The juxtaposition of their names cast more than suspicion on Madame Du Barry ; she suffered still more from the effects of a search made at Louveciennes by a detachment of the National Guard, who were scouring the environs of Paris for conspirators.² She was just then sheltering Monsieur de Maussabré, who had taken part in the defence of the Tuileries on August 10, and who in his illness and trouble was being cared for by the Countess. When the Guards came she maintained that no one besides her own household was there. But soon they found the young aide-de-camp hidden behind a bed. In vain she sought to deprive them of their prey, but her sobs and cries were of no avail against the drunken fury of the *sans-culottes*.³

Monsieur de Maussabré was confined in the Abbaye, where he met with a terrible death some days later, during the September massacres. In terror of the mob who streamed into the prison he had sought refuge in a chimney ; " straw was burnt under him to suffocate him and make him come down ; it made him fall and he was shot without being

¹ *Têtes à prix*, a pamphlet quoted by Vatel, Vol. III., p. 169.

² See Xavier Audouin's evidence (Vatel, Vol. III., p. 261) ; he said that at this time " the house at Luciennes was full of the former noblemen of the Court."

³ " They found an unfortunate youth of eighteen years lying ill in bed, handsome, brave, zealous and sensitive, young Maussabré, who was related to many a great French family, and M. de Brissac's former aide-de-camp. . . . They seized him, for this was their last day of marauding, and they wanted at least one prisoner. . . ." (J. Peltier, *Récit historique de la Révolution du 10 août*, London, 1793. Vol. II., p. 209.)

heard." Madame Du Barry was told the dreadful story by Monsieur d'Escourre.

But at the time she was trembling for a life more dear to her. In view of the need for recalling to Paris the National Guards garrisoned at Orleans, the Assembly decreed on September 2, 1792, that the prisoners of the High Court should be transferred to the château of Saumur. Eighteen hundred men were sent as their escort and guard under the command of Fournier, the American. This sinister creature began by allowing his men to plunder the possessions of his charges, and then, in defiance of his orders, he set out, not for Saumur, but for Paris. The fifty-three prisoners were conveyed in ten carts, with only straw on which to sit. They left Orleans on September 3, to cries of : " Down with the conspirators ! Down with the traitors ! " On the 6th, they halted for the day at Etampes ; at Arpajon they stayed a night. As they came nearer to Versailles, the hostility of the people became more and more threatening. " Death to the nobles ! " was cried on every side, and calm, handsome Brissac, distinguished from his companions for his height, was attacked more than all. He was in the third cart, and wore a blue suit with gold buttons, and riding boots.

The faithful Escourre was the first to give the Countess news of this journey :

Paris, *September 6, 1792.*

The Orleans prisoners will be at Versailles to-morrow. Two men have been sent by the Commune to meet them, and to tell the National Guard bringing them that it has already broken the law and must be responsible for what may happen to the prisoners, who ought to be judged legally. We must hope that they will arrive safe and sound, and that by gaining time their lives will be saved. Moreover, the Assembly is weary of bloodshed, and is suggesting an amnesty ; the sacrifice would not be very great, considering that no one is guilty. . . .

I have received ten letters from Orleans for the deputies, begging them to prevent the dangers that threaten the unfortunate Orleans prisoners, who, they say, will be murdered on their arrival. I delivered them at once. When

Madame de Maurepas heard of the transference of the Duke she wished at once to go to the Assembly, but she was prevented. She has written to Danton and to the Abbé Fauchet. Madame de Flamarens and I took the letters, which have roused the lively interest of the Abbé Fauchet. . . . I am depressed, body and soul, and shall have no peace until I know that the Duke is at Versailles, if one can get there; I shall send there if I cannot go. You should send too, but above all be careful to avoid any action that may become public and prejudice people against you.¹

At about one o'clock in the afternoon the procession reached the gates of Versailles. The mob pressed forward threateningly to meet the prisoners, for their hatred had been stirred up still more by the long delay. "They entered the town by Petit-Montreuil, crossed the Place d'Armes, went down the rue de la Surintendance, seeming to be going in the direction of the rue de l'Orangerie." The Council of the Commune had, as a matter of fact, decided to shut them up in the cages of the old menagerie in the Park, a proceeding "which would have the advantage of satisfying popular censure, as well as of weakening the mob's feelings of hatred, by replacing them with those of contempt."

But the furious crowd shouted, "Give us at least Brissac and Lessart!" One of them closed the gates of the town. The unfortunate prisoners had to turn back, and by the fountain of Quatre-Bornes they encountered the savage mob. The troops withdrew, and they were attacked with swords and pikes and bayonets. Brissac defended himself with a knife, and then with a cudgel; he received terrible wounds in the face, "on nose and mouth and forehead," but he fought to the very end.

At Louveciennes Madame Du Barry anxiously watched at her windows for the return of her messengers. Every hour that passed added to her anguish; evening came and

¹ It would be surprising that the Duchess de Brissac made no use, in her account of the Duke's last days, of a letter so important as this, if the same omission had not been made of all papers relating to his liaison with Madame du Barry.

she scarcely dared imagine the terrible truth, when the *Ça ira* announced the arrival of a strange procession to the village. Ragged men came, bearing a blood-stained trophy at the point of a pike ; it was the head of Brissac, and they hurled it with insults into the poor woman's salon.¹

"Since that day, Monsieur," she said to a friend some time afterwards, "I have been in misery, as you may well imagine. Thus was that terrible crime consummated, which has made me so unhappy and filled my life with eternal grief ! In the midst of the horrible happenings around me I retain my health. One does not die of grief. I am deeply moved, Monsieur, by your interest, which would soften my misery, if I did not feel it every moment. I heard news of your wife to-day, and suppose she will soon come to see me. I expect her with impatience ; there is consolation in meeting with people who share our sentiments, and I regret every moment I spend away from them."²

Madame Du Barry wrote also to another woman who had been dear to the murdered man. Brissac's exiled daughter could not be reconciled to his fate ; his horrible end had inflicted lasting injury on her soul :

No one can feel more than I, Madame, the extent of the loss you have sustained. I flatter myself that you do not mistake the motive which has withheld me from writing to you before and mingling my tears with yours. The fear of increasing your grief prevented me from speaking of it. Mine is at its height ; a career that should have been [so] fine, so glorious ! And what an end ! Great God ! The last wish of your most unfortunate father, Madame, was that I should cherish you like a sister ; the wish is too much in accordance with my feelings for me not to carry it out.

¹ The *Courrier Français* of September 15, 1792, wrote : "They say that Monsieur de Brissac's head was carried to Luciennes and left in Madame du Barry's salon." Vatel, after quoting the words, adds simply that "some years ago a skull was found in the gardens, which had been buried near the road leading to Prunay."

² This letter was perhaps written to Monsieur de Neuville, a relative of the Countess.

Rest assured thereof and do not doubt my life-long devotion and attachment.¹

Madame de Mortemart replied with the same expressions of grief :

September 30.

This morning, Madame, I received your letter of September 22. I must thank you for the good it did me, for it has lessened the misery of my heart, and given me the relief of tears. A score of times have I sat pen in hand, to write to you of my grief, to tell you of my bruised, my broken heart, to say how, since the fatal day when he left Paris, I have suffered, and still suffer more than I can express. But I thought wisest to delay writing to you until I could restrain some of the feelings of my heart, a heart that would fain pour out its misery to you, who share my unhappiness.

The last wish of him whom I love and regret for ever, is also my own heart's wish ; I shall love you like a sister, and my devotion will be life-long. His least desire is to me a sacred command, and I trust to be able to carry out all that he expressed, or would have expressed, in his last moments, and shall spare nothing in so doing.

Pardon my scrawl ; I have such pain in my head that my sight suffers.

Pray accept, Madame, the assurance of my sincere and eternal friendship.

¹ In the National Archives ; the rough copy of the letter was pinned to the original of the reply by Madame du Barry herself.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST DAYS OF A FAIR CONSPIRATOR

Madame Du Barry's fourth Journey to London—Her new Connections among the *Emigrés*—Her Return to Louveciennes—The Duke de Rohan-Chabot's Love—The Accusations of Citizen Greive—First Arrest of Madame Du Barry—Second Arrest—The Prison of Sainte-Pélagie—"Charges against the Du Barry"—The Trial—The Sentence—The Guillotine.

ONE month after her friend's tragic end, Madame Du Barry left for England. The principal reason for her visit was, as before, the diamond robbery, but she had many others as well. Chief among them were the longing to escape for a moment from a scene full of such terrible associations, and the wish to bring news and help from France to the expectant *émigrés*. For a whole year they had been without their faithful messenger, the kind-hearted Countess, and now she returned to them, herself in affliction, and all the more compassionate for having wept and suffered at the hands of those who had made them suffer too.

Was she a secret agent of the Emigration as her enemies then formally accused her of being? Had she "conspired"? Her journeys made it easy for her to serve the ends of a party and to place her wit and intelligence at the disposal of the counter-revolutionary plotters. Her well-known political sympathies, her connection with so many aristocrats and her tenderness of heart are evidence enough of her complicity, even if the documents produced at her trial had given convincing proof to the contrary.

This fourth journey was undertaken at a much more dangerous time than the previous ones. The monarchy had been destroyed and the decrees issued against the *émigrés* were becoming extremely rigorous. As an already

suspected person, the Countess took every precaution to secure a peaceful journey, by application to the authorities. Her passport was signed by Lebrun, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, whom she had known, and perhaps even protected, when he was one of the Chancellor Maupeou's secretaries. On the very day that the Convention solemnly abolished the monarchy, he sent her the following note that still breathes the courtesy of the old *régime* :

Paris, *September 21, 1792*, the IVth year of
Liberty and Equality.

I have the honour to inform you, Madame, that your passports have at last returned to me from the local authorities, examined and quite in order. I beg you to be so kind as to send a trustworthy person to fetch them. I believe such a precaution necessary to prevent them falling into the wrong hands. I am very sorry for the delays you have suffered, but assure you they are not of my doing.

Lebrun,

Minister for Foreign Affairs.

These precautions notwithstanding, Madame Du Barry was afraid of being accused of emigrating, and, to make still more sure, she wrote to the Minister, on the advice of such friends as d'Escourre and de Juilhac :

Louveciennes, *October 2.*

I have received, Monsieur, the letter you honoured me by writing, as well as the passports ; and I am touched at the trouble you have taken to have them examined. But as there is reference neither in your letter nor in the passport to my journey to London, where my presence is required for my unfortunate lawsuit, I fear to meet with difficulties when crossing ; and besides, if my local authorities think I am not authorised to make a journey abroad, they may look on me as having emigrated, and consequently affix their seal to my possessions. May I venture to hope, Monsieur, that your kindness and the wish you have expressed of being of service to me, will induce you to enlighten me on the matter ? I believe one word from you would dispose of all difficulties, and would obviate any discomfort I might otherwise meet with.

I beg you to be persuaded, Monsieur, of the lively gratitude with which I have the honour to be

Your most humble and obedient servant,
Du Barry.

In spite of the indiscretion of her urgent request, Lebrun hastened to obey. The Revolutionary Tribunal did not fail to animadvert upon the Minister's weakness for the woman who had formerly treated him with kindness, and whom he now dared not repulse.

Paris, *October 2, 1792.* Year I. of the French Republic.

As it is certain, Madame, that you only go to England to be present at the trial of those who stole your jewels, I do not think your local authorities can regard you as an *émigrée*, nor that they will go so far as to treat you as such, by affixing their seal on your possessions during your absence. But in order to avoid every mistake and reassure yourself on this point, you would do well to go in person and renew your declaration on the registers of the municipality of Louveciennes; you should ask for a copy of the declaration, which you should keep by you in case of need.

Lebrun,
Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The local authorities, whom the lady of Louveciennes informed of her departure, were honest men who were still well disposed towards her. "I formally bind myself to return to France as soon as my lawsuit is at an end," she said, and she alluded to her generous response to patriotic taxation, and to the proofs she had given of her "civism," and her "respect for the law." She wrote also to the President of the Convention, and on October 14 she left, travelling modestly by stage-coach as far as Calais. With her she brought the Duchess de Brancas, whose passport was quite in order, and the Duchess d'Aiguillon, who was emigrating and went as her waiting-woman.¹ This time

¹ Evidence of Blache at Madame Du Barry's trial. "Who is the Dame Brancas, whom you mention in your invitations to the Duke of Quinsburi [*sic*] ?—She is the Dame Brancas who accompanied me on my last journey to London. She was on her way to Holland to

the travellers were accompanied by the Chevalier de La Bondie, d'Escourre's nephew.

The Countess met in London the same elegant world of *émigrés* who had received her with such cordiality before. But this visit was not an occasion for entertainments and amusements. She was in deep mourning, and of all that sorrowful circle she bore the heaviest burden of grief. Bad news came from the Continent; the allies were beaten on every side by the Republican armies; the French Princes were in flight with creditors on their track; and their companions in exile were enduring all the terrors of poverty.

In England the assistance they received was better distributed; the money came straight from France in the hands of new exiles or secret agents. Among the latter was Madame Du Barry. She gave, and gave lavishly; but the sufferings of all could not be alleviated. Day by day they grew. The young René de Chateaubriand was dying of starvation in the streets of London. The priests, especially, succumbed in thousands to the privations which a generous reception could but slightly moderate. Madame Du Barry did her share of the work undertaken by the prelates who had found a refuge in London, Monsieur Blot de Chavigny, Bishop of Lombez, and Monsieur de La Marche, Bishop of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, who organised collections and subscriptions. When the venerable Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, Archbishop of Rouen, arrived, she placed at his disposal the sum of two hundred thousand livres.

The Countess and the Duchess de Brancas took a furnished house in Bruton Street, Berkeley Square, which Madame de la Suze gave up for them.¹ She sent for the Duchess de Mortemart, and the "sisterly friendship" between them, claim her inheritance, her father having recently died there. She had obtained a passport, not from the Minister Lebrun, but from another who preceded him in the Ministry." Madame de Brancas intended to meet several friends in London, notably the Marquis de Bouillé, as may be seen from his son's memoirs.

¹ Danloux's information as to where she lived is more reliable than that of Blache. In the examination of La Bondie, Mesdames de la Suze and de Gaucourt [Jaucourt] were mentioned as among her earliest visitors.

that Monsieur de Brissac had wished for, was begun. The Princess d'Hénin also came to live in Bruton Street, as well as the Abbé de Saint-Phar, Monsieur de Breteuil, and another of Louis XVI.'s Ministers, Bertrand de Moleville.

Thus Madame Du Barry associated constantly with the group of Constitutionalists ; she also used to see the Abbé Sabatier de Castres and Monsieur de Curt, a member of the Constituent Assembly. Then she also visited Monsieur de Narbonne, in whose salon she was observed by a spy, together with Monsieur de Talleyrand and several " former Bishops and noblemen." ¹ She was on good terms with all parties ; when the Bouillés arrived, she welcomed them as cordially as she did the La Tour du Pins ; her salon was open without distinction to the spokesmen of the most varied opinions, for all were drawn together by the common lot of exile. Every one liked her, and did justice to her good qualities ; but she seems to have acted with great imprudence, and by taking intimate part in the life of the *émigrés*, to have wished to share the furious hatred they had roused.

As a rule the card-parties in the house in Bruton Street were given by Madame Du Barry. The painter Danloux, the self-constituted and indiscreet chronicler of the doings of the society that he frequented, who dealt so unsparingly with feminine reputations among the *émigrés*, had nothing on which to remark in the conduct of the Countess. The most that he could do was to reflect on the high play that sometimes took place at her house. " Monsieur d'Attilly, a former officer in the Royal Guards, asked Monsieur de La Charce [de la Tour du Pin] if he had stayed late at Madame Du Barry's yesterday. ' I stayed until midnight,' he replied ; ' I played and lost, but not much, only twenty-eight shillings.' ' That's nothing, papa,'

¹ Declaration by Viard, made at the sitting of the Convention of December 7, 1792. Madame Du Barry admitted having seen Monsieur de Cruesol, Monsieur de Poix, Monsieur de Cahouët, and once only Monsieur de Colonne, and Monsieur d'Aiguillon.

said his son, 'compared to the other day.' . . ." "I addressed myself to Monsieur de la Charce," added the painter, "for I thought that, as I gave drawing-lessons to his son, he might be ready to be of service to me if occasion arose. I told him that, as he often went to see Madame Du Barry, who knew several Englishmen, I should be very pleased if he would persuade her to come and see my pictures. . . ." ¹

English society, which only welcomed the *émigrés* of note, received Madame Du Barry with great cordiality. At Windsor she was presented to George III. by the Duke of Queensberry, whom in her youth she had met as William Douglas in Paris. In a delightfully intimate note inviting Queensberry to dinner, she mentioned that she would bring the Duchess de Brancas. Through the Duke she was able to make the acquaintance of the English aristocracy, whose curiosity had been roused by her celebrity, and who were captivated by her distinction and charm. Her conversation with Pitt, who had already decided on war, touched on serious matters, and her communications with certain people were one day to be used against her with the most damaging effect. A note from Lord Hawkesbury, for instance, that was found among her papers, made it possible for her persecutors to establish her guilty connection with the enemies of France. ²

The Marquis de Bouillé described, in his memoirs, his first meeting with the former favourite.

At the time when I supped with the mistress of the Prince of Wales, I often met in London a woman, who had been similarly honoured with Royal favour, but whose position was of more importance and gave rise to more scandal, and whose fame excited my curiosity and even my interest to a

¹ Unpublished memoirs of Danloux (communicated by the Baron R. Portalis).

² Greive annotated Lord Hawkesbury's note as follows: "A letter, proving her intrigues with George III.'s courtiers. This Lord H. is the secret adviser of the tyrant, who rules Pitt himself and has for twenty years in reality held the reins of government in his hands. . . ."

much greater degree. This was the too famous Madame Du Barry. She had come to London on account of a law-suit that had been going on for some years in connection with the theft of her diamonds, and in order to escape from the scenes of savagery to which her lover, the Duke de Brissac, had some months before fallen a victim, almost before her very eyes, and whither she had the imprudence and misfortune to return soon after, only to meet with as cruel a fate. She lived with the Duchess de Mortemart, Monsieur de Brissac's daughter, her fatal devotion to whose interests was the cause of her return to France,¹ and with the Duchess de Brancas. The intimate relations between the latter and my father opened the doors of their house to me, and we spent nearly all our evenings there.

. . . Madame Du Barry was then about forty-seven, and it was rather late to make the acquaintance of a woman whose beauty had been her merit, her fortune, and her renown. But although the freshness and first splendour of her charms had long since vanished, the traces that remained were sufficient to give some idea of the effect they must have had. Her eyes were still large and blue, and with the sweetest expression imaginable ; there were still the beautiful fair, chestnut hair, the lovely mouth, the rounded oval of her face, whose heightened colour did not detract from its charm ; her noble, elegant figure still retained some of its supple grace, in spite of a slight tendency to portliness ; and finally there were the voluptuous curves of her figure, that her attire, especially in the morning, scarcely concealed. Her disposition was in no sense common, much less vulgar ; though without pretensions to brilliance, she had more wit than people gave her credit for ; besides, her goodness of heart, no less than her simplicity, should have been sufficient compensation. . . . I did not gain so much from my conversations with her as I might have done at another time ; we were too absorbed by the tragic situation of the King and Queen. And I was as much struck as I was moved by the fact that this woman, whom they had both treated so harshly on their accession to the throne, could not

¹ The Count d'Espinhal, in his *Liste des principales victimes de la Révolution*, gives a similar explanation of Madame Du Barry's return to France.



LOUIS XVI
From the painting by Callet

cease thinking of their misfortunes, and wept for them tears that were as sincere as they were frequent.¹

Madame Du Barry and her friends rightly feared the worst; for on January 21, 1793, Louis XVI. went to the scaffold. Outside France the terrible scene aroused violent indignation. The news came to London in the evening, and the theatres were closed at once, the audiences leaving to the strains of *God Save the King*. Madame Du Barry did not hide her grief; she went into mourning and took part in all the services held in the chapels of the Catholic Embassy for the soul of the "martyr" King; affectionate remembrance and pity inspired her with a courage that made her indifferent whether or no she were being observed by revolutionary spies.

The day after the death of Louis XVI. all Europe rose up in arms. The Convention took the offensive, and on February 1 declared war on England. Pitt formed the first coalition against France, while the Royalist insurrection in the West spread and rapidly covered all that part of France, the troops of the Vendée acting in the name of Louis XVII. as "the great Catholic army." Such supporters of the monarchy as still remained in France became leaders of rebellion, whether openly or in secret. Madame Du Barry, whose capital was invested abroad, was in a position to do the conspirators invaluable service. In January, 1793, she made the Duke de Rohan-Chabot a loan from London of two hundred thousand livres, paid by the bankers Vandenyver,² as well as other loans unknown to the Committee of Public Safety. The transfer of these enormous sums at such a time would seem to point to the Duke's complicity in the rising of the Western provinces, and to the fact that the Countess provided him with the needful funds.³

¹ *Souvenirs du Marquis de Bouillé*, Vol. II., p. 110.

² The MSS. in the Versailles Library include numerous documents connected with a lawsuit between Madame Du Barry's heirs and those of Rohan-Chabot.

³ The explanations given by Madame Du Barry and her bankers to the Revolutionary Tribunal, prove that they acted in concert. The documents seem perfectly in order, and innocent of illegal inten-

The last of the many lawsuits that had their origin in the diamond affair was one in which Madame Du Barry was sued by the Jew, Simon. He claimed that he had assisted Forth in arresting the robbers of Louveciennes, and demanded the promised reward. Forth held that the Jew's claims were too high, and the case was brought before a London court. Roüen, her ladyship's jeweller, was once more to appear as witness, but Forth did not trust him, and wrote to the Countess :

Sunday, *February 3.*

Madame,

Monsieur Sleigh has convinced me still further that Roüen's appearance in the witness-box can only injure us, and we shall therefore not call him, especially as Sleigh has had a letter from Monsieur Trochereau, giving *good reasons* for Roüen's having told him several times he could not go to London. If Roüen comes, make some excuse for not seeing him and send him to me (at the same time being careful not to offend him) ; I undertake to speak to him, for from what Monsieur Trochereau tells me, he is capable of anything.

At all times and on all occasions, Madame, I beg you to count on the zeal and devotion of

Your faithful servant,

N. Parker Forth.

Nevertheless, Roüen crossed the Channel, but, as he "followed Forth's instructions in everything," Madame Du Barry's interests were safeguarded.¹ She used the verdict as an excuse for returning to France, for the local authorities of Louveciennes had after all, on February 16, affixed their seal on her possessions. Pitt was said to have tried to persuade her to remain, saying that she was going to certain death ; but she pleaded the necessity for fulfilling certain obligations of honour, and, in fear and trembling, went to meet what proved to be her fate. As the passports she possessed for herself and her servants had limited the

tions ; but the dates are incriminating, for the loans coincide with the insurrection.

¹ Forth's diary mentions the verdict on February 28, and Madame Du Barry's departure on March 5.

length of her stay in London to six weeks, she was compelled to stop in Calais, in order to set matters right. There she saw the Duchess de Mortemart, who had for some time been there in hiding under the name of Mortimer.¹ Having taken the necessary steps for obtaining new passports from the executive authority,² the Countess received them on March 17, and left on the following day. Her end was drawing near.

The first thing she did on getting home was to write to the governors of the district, and, putting a bold face on the matter, she expostulated with them for the severe measures they had taken during her absence :

Louveciennes, *March 27, 1793.*

Citizen Governors,

Citizeness de Vaubernier Du Barry is most surprised that, after all the proofs she gave you of the reasons compelling her to leave for England, you have yet treated her as an *émigrée*. Before her departure she informed you of the declaration she had made before her local authorities, and you placed it on your register. . . . All France knows of the robbery at her house, which took place on the night of January 10, 1791. . . . The final verdict was not pronounced until February 28 last, as the enclosed certificate will testify.

The Countess once more took possession of her property, to the great annoyance of the patriotic members of the parish, of whom indeed there were but few, and whose failing ardour had to be quickened by the Englishman Greive, who had recently taken lodgings in an inn. The strange career of this enigmatical person is interesting. As a "citizen of the United States" he boasted of his supposed

¹ "Madame de Mortemart lived with her at Calais on her return from London." (A note made by the juryman Topino-Lebrun, Vatel. Vol. III., p. 280.) Madame de Mortemart's stay at Calais was confirmed by Madame Du Barry herself during her examination at Sainte Pélagie.

² A letter written from "Calais, Thursday at noon," which has been published by Vatel, Vol. II., p. 429, seems to refer to this incident. A pass made out by the local authorities of Calais contains a complete description of Madame Du Barry, who gave her age as "forty years."

services to Washington and Franklin. Whatever these may have been he was a fanatical revolutionary, intoxicated with his own importance, and, like his friend Marat, a man of letters. Louveciennes became the centre of his operations; for in that flower of luxury and refinement, the ex-favourite, he saw the representative of the elegant depravity of a detested government, and in her château, a nest of aristocrats, a Royalist rendezvous, and a refuge of emigrants.

Madame Du Barry suspected little at first. She found her Louveciennes very lonely without her former friend. Mademoiselle Chon, too, was away, having withdrawn to Toulouse, and no one could take her place, neither the young Marquise de Boissésou, nor Mesdames Graillet and de La Neuville, her relatives who came to live with her. Her devoted servant, Morin, had cared for the house during her absence, and nothing had changed in the beautiful dwelling but the soul of its mistress. All her desire was to return to London and she used every possible means of obtaining a new passport. Everywhere she produced her certificate, testifying to the continuation of her trial, signed by Queensberry and Whitshed Keene, "two of the basest of George III.'s flunkies, and the most rabid enemies of the Revolution," according to Greive. But her influence was at an end.

In order to distract her mind she kept open house and entertained all the neighbouring nobility that was left. "There is a chain of aristocrats of both sexes," wrote Greive, "along the Seine, extending from Mantes to Rueil." Madame Du Barry brought together as her guests very different kinds of people; there were an abbess, Madame de La Porte, the Abbé de Fontenilles, nephew to the Abbess of Pont-aux-Dames, the pretty Princess Lubomirska, the Chevalier d'Escourre, her cousin Juilhac, the Abbé Beliard, Colonel Morgan,¹ the Marquis de Donnissan,² the Prince

¹ "The infamous traitor Morgan," whom Marat had so often denounced, and whose activities, according to Greive, were so dangerous.

² The father of the Marquise de Lescure, whose husband led the revolt of the Vendée, and who became later Marquise de la Roche-jacquelin.

Charles de Rohan, and finally the Duke de Rohan-Chabot¹ The Princess de Rohan-Rochefort had become the intimate friend and confidant of the Countess. They were neighbours, and used to lend each other their friends, whose numbers the emigration had so sadly diminished. The Princess wrote to Madame Du Barry :

Versailles, May 13, 1793.

I am sending for news of my charming neighbour, and to beg her to let me know if she will be at home in the afternoon. If so I inform her beforehand that I shall come, and bring with me my budding coadjutor,² who has lost some of his illusions, at least, they have been lost for him by the nation, which *unriches* us, as Clémentine says, using a word that is quite new to our language, but that might very well be included in the dictionary for its expressiveness, even though the Academy should reject it. Truth, they say, comes from the mouth of children. The boy I bring is gentle and good, tender and loving ; he has nothing to reform, but much to learn, among other things, the happiness of pleasing you. If the desire to do so constitutes any claim to success, I will go bail that he may expect it. He is as quiet and restrained as his elder brother is wild. I dare not speak of Cain and Abel, but the resemblance is very close. But I drop the subject, for it is one that pains me greatly, I assure you. So does the absence of the other two, of whom one is, both morally and physically, a most delightful girl. Little Henri will be the image of Jules, as all reports give me to hope, and that is all I wish for. But thanks to his father's stupid obstinacy, the unfortunate child will be thought an *émigré*, and will run great risks, which I could have avoided

¹ Louis Antoine Auguste de Rohan-Chabot, Count and later Duke de Chabot, after the death of his cousin, the Duke de Rohan, in November, 1791, had settled in Brussels with his daughter-in-law, then Princess de Léon, in 1790 ; in 1792 he had returned to France. He had been a widower since 1786, and died in 1807 at the age of seventy-five. (*Notice historique et généalogique sur la maison de Chabot*, Paris, 1834.)

² During her trial, Madame Du Barry was questioned at some length on the subject of this letter. She replied that the Princess de Rohan's " budding coadjutor " was " her son Jules, who was then, or intended to become, a coadjutor in Strasburg.—Did you see him ?—Yes."

for him. I have done my very best with the father, but he and the uncle have made my efforts useless, which fills me with despair, for I fear and dread further evils. Misfortunes surround us on all hands, and have become our only food. I can only wish with all my heart for their end. You may find it hard to believe that I can still hope for happiness, who have reached the end of my autumn and am approaching that sad winter of life they call old age. But nothing could be more true. I only speak of all my misfortunes to you, because you know their bitterness better than others. I dare to hope that your tender interest will share my misery and thereby soften my grief.

I ask permission to send you my doctor by-and-by, on rising from table. He is very eager to see your charming villa ; so is Monsieur de la Tour, who is Secretary to the Swedish Embassy here under the Baron de Staal (*sic*). He used to be reader and librarian to the late King, who valued and loved him very much. At last I leave you, for a walk in my future garden, where I hope one day to be able to ask you to tea. Unless, alas ! this hateful stay at Versailles has driven you away for ever. Until this afternoon, fair lady ; I shall greet you, as ever, with delight.

R. R. R.

[Rohan-Rohan-Rochefort.]

I am expecting Monsieur de la Bondy (*sic*) to dinner. Would it be indiscreet to ask if you would send us your carriage ? It suited me so well the other day, that I dread all the more the terrible jolting of our public vehicles, which are fatal to one who often suffers from attacks of hæmorrhoids.

I have given Monsieur de la Vallerie (*sic*) the little note for the butler in whom you are interested. I hope they will at once satisfy his claims. La Vallerie assured me that yours would be attended to this week, and as it is under his jurisdiction I quite believe it.¹

¹ The latter bears the following comment by Greive : " From the aristocrat, formerly Princess de Rohan-Rochefort, a woman whose sinfulness was greater than her folly, and who enjoyed a certain favour with several governors of Versailles." The Princess is mentioned by Madame Vigée le Brun in the beginning of her *Souvenirs* ; she was about the same age as Madame Du Barry.

The Princess, who had already been imprisoned as a suspicious character, and was to be so once more, certainly had good reason to think the times full of horror.¹ The recent reverses suffered by the Republican armies meant increased danger for the nobles who had remained in France. Even the village of Louveciennes felt the disturbing after-effects of these events. Greive was the leader of its inhabitants, and was supported by Blache, the spy who had watched Madame Du Barry's movements in London. Her cook Salanave had induced Zamore to join this Republican club with him. Thenceforth she won no pity from her enemies, and the days of anarchy, that followed the fall of the Girondins, only facilitated the task that hatred had set itself to perform.

Greive took advantage of the repressive laws to present, on June 26, 1793, an address signed by thirty-six of the villagers, "which had for object to draw the paternal attention of the administration to the dangers to which the country was exposed, and to the measures that ought to be taken." Blache also wrote that "this woman's house was the refuge and rendezvous of all the villains who conspired against our unhappy country." He gave a list of the aristocrats of Louveciennes, which included the names of Madame Du Barry and three of her servants, and the very same evening they were all arrested. The servants were removed to the prison at Versailles, but she and her relatives stayed in the château under the guard of a gendarme, whom she had to pay. At first her detention in her home did not seem to alarm her friends, and the Princess Lubomirska proposed coming to join her in her imprisonment.

Chaillot, *July 6.*

I have only just heard, Madame, of your return to Luciennes, and of the unjust persecution to which you have been subjected. The former would make me fly to you on

¹ On the trials undergone by the Princess de Rohan-Rochefort and her family during the Revolution, see Jacques de la Faye's book, *La Princesse Charlotte de Rohan et le Duc d'Enghien*, Paris, 1906.

the wings of friendship, while the latter, Madame, gives me a right to ask as a favour if I can be of some use to you. If my zeal is unsuccessful in obtaining this satisfaction, at least allow me to share your solitude and prove to you that those, whom you have been kind enough to distinguish, do not easily forget it. Farewell, Madame ; I expect, with an impatience that is worthy of the interest you inspire, the reply that you will grant my desire to come to you at once.

Alex., Princess Lubomirska.

The charming Polishwoman, who professed "a cult" for Madame Du Barry, had no idea of the danger she ran by writing such a letter of friendship.¹

But Greive saw that the local authorities were not hostile to Madame Du Barry, and that he would have to attack her before a higher court. On July 3 he was permitted to read before the Convention an address in the name of the *sans-culottes* of Louveciennes :

True to the dear principles of Equality, in which lies the happiness of life . . . we have commenced operations by the arrest of a woman who has figured but too largely in the annals of our monarchical history. In spite of her notoriously unpatriotic connections . . . she has, until to-day, by the use of her wealth and of caresses, whose value she learnt at the court of a weak and crapulous tyrant, been able to abate the vigilance of certain good men, who are not accustomed to this type of intrigue, and to evade the

¹ In a second note she gave Madame Du Barry news of the Queen at the beginning of her trial: "The Queen is still at the Conciergerie, and it is not true that she was going to be taken back to the Temple. However, I am not disturbed as to her fate ; our rulers are tired of glory, and, I suppose, want to rest on their laurels." The ironical phrase, and the friendly letters to Madame Du Barry, were enough to lead to the arrest of the unfortunate stranger, and bring her later to the scaffold.

It would be unjust to accuse Madame Du Barry of making imprudent revelations about the Princess Lubomirska, as Monsieur Casimir Stryienski has done in his interesting memoir on the Princess (*Deux victimes de la Terreur*, Paris, 1899). The signature of one of the two letters taken must have been enough to identify the writer, and Madame Du Barry could not lie in the face of such evidence, nor could she have imagined that correspondence, which she knew to be innocent, would injure her friend.

spirit of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which says "that the law shall be the same for all, whether it punishes or protects." In her château (for such there still are) did Brissac begin and carry on his liberticidal scheming in favour of the tyrant and against Paris. There, too, aristocratic conventicles were held at different periods of the Revolution; thence departed those daily couriers to Brissac during his detention at Orleans. . . . With this dangerous instrument, however small the importance of such a creature may seem, with her did all aristocrats, great and small, of all kinds and all shades of opinion, feel sure of obtaining a favourable reception, a protection and certain favour, that prove her liberticidal sentiments and wishes. . . . It was she who was on the closest and most constant terms of intimacy with Forth, the famous English spy. . . . It was she who, intoxicated with her title of Countess, complacently received homage as such, and, in defiance of the decrees, gave those of Prince, Count, Baron, Marquis and the rest to those who frequented her château. Finally, it was she who, displaying a luxury worthy of a monarch's former mistress and surrounded by a numerous household composed almost wholly of insolent calumniators of the Revolution, . . . insulted by this luxury the sufferings of the unfortunate beings whose husbands, fathers, brothers, and children had shed their blood in our armies for the sake of *Equality*. . . .¹

At the end of the address, Thuriot, the President of the Convention, replied: "The deeds you have been denouncing are grave; rest assured that if they are proved against her, her head will fall on the scaffold."

Danger seemed imminent, and the faithful friends of the Countess became anxious. The Rohans, La Bondie, Juilhac and Escourre redoubled their applications to the Directory and to the authorities of the district of Seine-et-Oise; Madame Du Barry used every means of protest²; an "oblig-

¹ The text of the address was given by Greive himself in the pamphlet he had printed on July 31, entitled: *Sham Equality, or a short History of the Protection of the Du Barry, Louis XV.'s Former Mistress, containing Documents connected with her Arrest*. . . .

² She even had herself taken to Versailles, escorted by the Council of Louveciennes and several inhabitants, in order to lodge her protest.

ing advocate " entered a clever protest in her name against the "defamatory libel" read before the Convention¹; a petition was sent on July 7 to the Committee of Public Safety, signed by some sixty inhabitants of Louveciennes, who bore witness that citizeness Du Barry was the benefactress of the parish. A counter-enquiry on the subject of her patriotism was conducted with marked good will, and at last, on August 13, a resolution was passed restoring to liberty the accused and her servants.²

Perhaps the liberation of the Countess was due to Greive's influence being less than that of La Vallery, a member of the Directory, who had already done her service and who took up her defence with remarkable ardour. "Rest assured," he wrote to her, "that if there are any occasions when I hold my work to be of worth, you have the right to call upon me. Your sex entitles you to seek peace and seclusion, your charm . . . A thousand pardons, citizeness; a republican and a stranger should only speak in terms of business. Pray accept the assurance of my respect, and of all the interest you have the right to inspire."

"Citizeness Du Barry's" fascination seems thus to have been still all-powerful. Greive himself was said to have fallen under the spell of her attraction, his growing hatred being only the result of unhappy love. To be sure, his conduct is quite adequately explained by a solely political passion aggravated to fury, but she whom he called "the rose-and-ivy-crowned Bacchante," was soon to accuse him of worse audacities; "he began by taking possession of the petitioner's person," she wrote; "words cannot describe the horrible outrages of which he was guilty."

If this is true, how indignantly she must have repulsed

¹ This lawyer Delainville, did not hesitate to write: "Citizeness Dubarry has always manifested unequivocal patriotism since the beginning of the Revolution. . . . *She has broken off all her former connections*, and has always lived alone in her house at Louveciennes." But such an audacious line of defence could not be maintained for long.

² All the documents of the case are to be found in Vatel, Vol. III., pp. 436-448.

the sinister wretch, how gratefully accepted the loyal protection of another ! Terrified at the ferocity with which she was attacked, threatened with loss of liberty and even of life, and still trembling from the remembrance of Brissac's agony, she surrendered herself to the love of the proud and tender Rohan-Chabot. Her last amour would have remained a secret, but for a letter lost from Madame Du Barry's papers. It was unsigned, but Greive had examined it, and, with the intuition of hatred, or of love, had known what name should have been placed at the end of the lines.¹ The brown seal bore a flaming heart and the inscription : *Yours for ever*. The letter was probably sent together with a portrait of Brissac ; the Duke wrote to the Countess as follows :

September 7, 1793.

I send you, my dear, sweet friend, the picture you wished for ; a sad and gloomy present, but one that I feel with you was what you should desire. In a position like ours, with so much cause for pain and unhappiness, we seek food for our melancholy, as above all beseems us.

I sent for the three portraits of you, which *he owned* [Brissac], they are here now, and I have kept one of the small ones, the original of the one in which you wear a white shift or dressing gown, and a plumed hat.² The second is a copy of the one of which the head is finished, but the dress only sketched in. Neither of them is framed. The large one by Madame le Brun is delightful, a fascinating and speaking likeness, of infinite charm ; but, indeed, I should have thought it indiscreet to choose it, and the one I have kept is so charming, so like and so winning, that I am well satisfied with it, and transported with joy at possessing it.

The one begun by Letellier is only outlined, and the head is no more than a sketch that may become a good likeness. I have had it taken back to the painter.³

¹ " This letter is undoubtedly from Rohan-Chabot." The Goncourts have attributed it to the " Prince de Rohan-Rochefort " (*sic*).

² It is still in the possession of the Rohan family. Another one by Madame le Brun belonged to Hubert Robert, and was included in the catalogue of his sale.

³ Letellier's work is unknown to us ; a painter named Tellier exhibited in the Salon of 1793.

With regard to the large portrait and the copy of the one I keep, tell me, dear friend, if you want me to send them to you, or if I should have them sent back where they were, or what you intend to do with them. I have no other wish than to have one which I can carry on me, and which should never leave me.

Do come, dear love, and spend two days here ; come and dine with me, and with any one else you may like. Give me a few moments of happiness, which I only enjoy when with you. Answer all my questions ; and come for at least a moment to see him who loves you beyond and above all, to the very end of his life. A thousand times I kiss the most charming woman in the world, whose noble, tender heart is worthy of eternal devotion.

This love letter from the time of the Terror is all the more moving, because the position of the two lovers was hourly becoming more perilous. On September 17 the "suspect" law was issued against "those who, whether by their conduct, or their connections, or their words and writings, have shown themselves to be partisans of tyranny or of federalism, and enemies of liberty." The duty of applying this indeterminate definition was entrusted to the members of the Revolutionary Committees ; in all the municipalities they drew up lists of "suspects" whom they proceeded to arrest. The Committee of Public Safety was reorganised, and their inquisitorial powers were thenceforth unlimited. Greive began his final attacks on his victim.

Ever since the Countess had regained her liberty, he had secretly been working to stir up the village against her, and in order to justify his ferocious persecution he printed a pamphlet appealing to the basest passions of the mob :

In kindly consideration of the tender consciences of those who adore great names the *sans-culottes* of Louveciennes declare that the only object of the step they took [at the Convention] was to promote the safety of their country. . . . Far from abusing or bearing ill-will to the former dispenser of Court favour, they have looked on her in the same light as her waiting woman, except for the difference of her fifty thousand écus income ; they have exhibited the

same Republican firmness in enforcing the law against Gouy, her porter, Prétry, her adviser, Morin, the political intermediary between her and constituted authority . . .

That authority being corrupted and favourable to her, he denounced them with anger, and ended up with the furious cry : “ Death to the courtesan of Louveciennes, to the rose-and-ivy-crowned Bacchante ! ”

The country folk abused her when she passed, women insulted her at her very doors ; and in terror she addressed a petition to the governors of the department, who were not unfavourably disposed towards her. “ The malevolence of my accusers has reached such a point that I fear every thing from them. . . . I am therefore compelled to entreat you to act with promptitude, and I venture to add, citizens, that you owe it to humanity.” But her complaints were too late ; Greive and Blache had won the hearing of the Committee of Public Safety by a second denunciation, and her arrest was decided at the sitting of September 21 :

The Committee decrees that the woman called Du Barry, resident at Louveciennes, shall be arrested and conveyed to Sainte Pélagie in Paris, where she is to be detained in the interests of the public safety, as suspected of unpatriotic and aristocratic sentiments. Her possessions are to be confiscated, her papers examined ; any that are of a suspicious character are to be brought to the Committee of Public Safety. The execution of the arrest is committed to the charge of Citizen Greive, who is authorised to call on any civil or legal official he may happen to need in carrying out his duty, as well as on military force, if required. Further, citizen Greive is to arrest and have conveyed to Paris, where they are to be confined in the prison of La Force in the interests of public safety, all those who are at Luciennes with the said Du Barry, on the occasion of the execution of the aforesaid arrest.

Boucher-Saint-Sauveur,
Amar,
Vadier,
Panis.

The Committee placed three thousand livres at Greive's disposal, to defray the necessary expenses of carrying out their commands. On September 22 he appeared suddenly at Louveciennes, accompanied by the Mayor, other municipal officials and two gendarmes, who came to affix their seal to the property of Louveciennes. The poor woman at once rushed to her room to try to destroy the papers in her possession. Greive, being suspicious, followed her, and seized the correspondence and printed matter lying on the table. A struggle ensued, in which she snatched the letters from him, seeking above all to obtain the signatures. But he soon overpowered her weak resistance and dragged her away. She was forced into the public conveyance, and taken towards Paris.

At the foot of the "Bougival hill" the little procession met Escourre in a chaise. Greive ordered him to get down and take his place beside the prisoner. Everything points to his having then offered to save her life on certain conditions; but rather than strike such a bargain, she chose to have her name entered in the register of prisoners at Sainte-Pélagie that very evening.

"The part of the building provided for the women," wrote Madame Roland, "is divided by very long and narrow corridors, along one side of which are small cells. . . . Each little cell is closed by means of a large bolt and lock, which a man comes and opens every morning; after that the inhabitants gather in the corridors, on the staircases, in a little court or in a damp and noisome hall . . ." ¹ Besides Madame Roland, the Countess met among the prisoners Mesdames de Gouy and de Créquy-Montmorency, Mademoiselle de Moncrif, the wives of Brissot and Pétion, and the nine actresses of the Comédie Française, who had been there since September 3; among the latter was Mademoiselle Raucourt, whose brilliant début at Versailles as

¹ *Mémoires*, Paris, 1864, p. 288. Madame Roland speaks of the horror with which the unhappy "suspects" were filled at coming into contact with fallen women and the "scum of the earth," and at the obscene language they heard.

Queen Dido she had witnessed. Madame Roland, who despised her without knowing her, did not deign to notice Madame Du Barry among her fellow captives. The day after her imprisonment the newcomer dictated a letter, which showed that she was still calm and courageous, to Henriette Couture, one of her women, who was free :

To citizeness Henriette, at Luciennes.

I send Henriette news of myself ; I am well, and find everything I need here, as well as an agreeable woman with whom to sleep. Let me know of those who are left, if they have confiscated my things, and if the villagers have petitioned for my freedom. Send me a lawn cap, and also my shifts with the little coloured stripes, and the white ones ; send me shifts, handkerchiefs, and fichus, and all that can be sent. Tell the housekeeper to send me a dozen table-napkins, also towels and sheets.

Henriette is to go and see the justice of the peace at Marly to ask him to make out my certificate of residence. It must be sent to me to be signed, and I shall then send it back to be signed in the presence of nine witnesses. If there is no time to get ready a white cap, send me a coloured one ; send also news of what happens in the house, and if it is well watched.

Speak to the villagers who are interested in me, and tell them that I am well.

Madame Roussel and her companions in misfortune are still at La Force. I have not yet seen any one to defend us.¹

Madame Du Barry was thus still hopeful of regaining her liberty ; she would not have been so calm if she had known that the Vandenyvers, father and sons, had likewise been arrested, and their papers seized. Another supporter was

¹ This note was published in the *Annales révolutionnaires*, 1908. Only the last four lines are in Madame Du Barry's own hand, as was remarked by Greive, who wrote on the document : " This letter is from the Du Barry written the day after her imprisonment. The 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th lines are in her writing. It shows that the woman Couture was the Du Barry's confidant, and we now have every reason to believe that the weakness of which this cunning woman complained, was only a sham to move the feelings of the agent, so that she could be allowed to remain at Louveciennes as correspondent and spy."

also lost to her in La Vallery, the obliging governor of Seine-et-Oise, who had committed suicide. Denounced by Greive as the henchman of the former Countess, accused by the Convention on some matter connected with taxation and certain what fate awaited him, he threw himself into the Seine near the bridge of La Râpée.¹

The prisoner knew nothing of these happenings, and trusting in the devotion of her Versailles friends, she sent the following protest to the authorities of the department. It is much more of an accusation than of a defence, and the brave words she wrote from prison reveal more strikingly than all else her energy and resourcefulness.

Citizeness Du Barry to the citizen-governors of the
department.

Saint-Pélagie, *October 2, 1793.* Year II. of the
French Republic.

Citizens,

You will remember that by the decree which was communicated to you, the Committee of Public Safety has placed my person and possessions under the protection of the department and of the local authorities of Louveciennes. The integrity of the Committee has been outraged, and that of the new members of the Committee will be so likewise. Its commands, which were only based on measures taken to ensure public safety, are being plainly transgressed, for it can never have intended to place all my goods and furniture at the mercy of my enemy, who has been so vociferous in his declarations. Never can the Committee have intended to let him usurp my place and position, disposing absolutely of my house and my goods; they have always been under your guard and protection, under the ægis of the law, the duty of enforcing which has been placed in your hands by the whole area of our department.

I dare thus to invoke the supervision, the paternal care, that all whom you govern have always experienced from you. Let citizen Greive carry out the law and the orders he has

¹ See Vatel, Vol. III, p. 210. The accusatory decree against La Vallery and two of his colleagues was issued on September 15. There is no ground for believing in the existence of romantic relations between him and the Countess.

received, but do not let him go beyond his instruction. See to it that my house and goods be spared further pillage ! He is responsible to you for the execution of the commands enjoined on him in your district.

Of what do they accuse me ? My unpatriotic sentiments and my fortune ! But my fortune and my goods are in themselves proof of my devotion to my country. In view of the several opportunities that I had of going to England, if I had not loved my country, should I not also have been able to send most of my fortune there, thus deserting the soil of France ? I therefore owe the persecution I have suffered only to my love for my country. You will think favourably, citizen governors, of all that I have done in the cause of the Revolution ; you cannot allow me to be oppressed any longer, for I have faith in your justice and humanity.

Citizeness Du Barry.¹

In the meantime Greive and Salanave obtained the necessary powers from the Committee of Public Safety to break the seals at Louveciennes, of whose treasures they made the inventory : they then confided them to the care of Zamore and the National Guards. Greive took possession of the papers that had escaped destruction and were found in the furniture or in drawers. He made abstracts of them, annotated and compared them, and thus put together the most weighty collection of incriminating evidence. Never was trial better prepared or more ardently prosecuted ! The man knew everything about the Countess, initiated as he was by the treachery of her servants into each intimate particular of her life, to which knowledge he could further add that derived from the espionage practised on her in London.

The letters taken are full of marginal comments in the minute writing of her accuser, and sometimes notes completing the information are pinned on. The accusations are very precise and well supported by facts. Among the

¹ This document is all in Madame Du Barry's writing. It was communicated to the Committee of Public Safety, and bore the tragic inscription : " Nothing to be done."

many wrongs complained of, some seem ridiculously puerile, but several others are important and may well have excited the passions of that time. They constitute the history of a counter-revolutionary, of a conspirator whose devotion to her friends was carried to foolhardiness, and even to the point of death. Greive next summed up the poor woman's culpability in a few pages, and with infernal skill prepared the way for the examining magistrates. An unbiassed reading of his work, together with the authentic documents he used, compel belief in the evidence he produced. Madame Du Barry violated the Revolutionary law, and betrayed the Republic to the best of her ability.

Charges against the Du Barry.¹

1. She enjoyed the favour of the Crown of France, even after her so-called disgrace, and until the date of the Revolution she has been connected with those who are now our most cruel enemies.

Proofs. The letters of Calonne, of Villedeuil, of Durvey, Court banker and Beaujon's successor, etc.

2. She kept up relations with them after the Revolution.

Proofs. In her correspondence and intimacy with Brissac, with his daughter, formerly Duchess de Mortemart, . . . as is shown as much by her correspondence with them as by the notes and letters referring to the connection, and by the evidence of citizen Blache and other eye-witnesses; by her intimacy with the former Chevalier de Coigny, to whose dealings with foreign powers on behalf of the tyrant reference is made; . . . by her intimacy with the former Duke de Coigny, his father, an *émigré*; with the woman Brunoy, an *émigrée*; with the wife of the Portuguese Ambassador, a relative of Lafayette, one of our most violent

¹ But that it would take too long, it would be possible to annotate this extract, referring each point to the original documents of Madame Du Barry's *dossier*, several of which have been quoted in the course of the book. The accounts have obviously been exaggerated, but on the whole Greive's chief deductions were justified in view of the facts that he collated. Vatel's neglect of this document, that was given incorrectly but in its entirety by Dauban, is inexplicable. But Vatel's one object is to prove Madame Du Barry's innocence, even in the face of all evidence.

enemies ; with the former Duchess de Brancas, . . . with the former Marquis de Nesle, an *émigré*, with the former Countess de Laigle ; with the former Chevalier de Durfort . . . with La Bourdic, as may be seen from the annexed documents in which the latter, when arrested at Versailles, recommends a young man to her notice ; with La Vouigny, an *émigrée*, for whom, according to the documents, both she and Brissac worked in London and in Paris to procure her passports ; with Breteuil ; with the man named Laroche, ex-curate of Agen, Abbé of Fontenilles or Laigle, who was guillotined a month ago in the Place de la Révolution ; ¹ with de Boissésou, an *émigré*, who married her niece, formerly major in the Condé Dragoons, of which Jaucourt was Lieutenant-Colonel (see a letter from Boissésou to Brissac . . . where he speaks of his principles, etc.) ; with le Graillet, an *émigré*, formerly Guard of Artois, the man whose titles to nobility, warrants, etc., were found buried in the garden of Louveciennes. . . . (Graillet's daughter always stayed with the Du Barry ; her mother is detained at Versailles as the result of the recent denunciation of a section) ; with the woman d'Harvelay, now Calonne, as appears from notes of her journey to London, for instance, as to a ring given to the woman Calonne . . . by money given to her coachman ; by her connection with the wife of Le Brun, the painter, a friend of Calonne, whom he employed in foreign courts, for it is well-known that the woman Le Brun travelled all over Europe after the Revolution (see, besides, how she ridicules the Revolution in a few words in the only letter from her we have found dated from Naples) ² ; with d'Aiguillon, mother and son (Blache will prove it) . . . ; with Narbonne . . . ; with the former Princess d'Hénin (Blache will prove it) ; with Forth, the famous English spy, who skilfully took advantage of her diamond robbery, whether real or imaginary, to make her a tool in promoting the plots of the Courts of the Tuileries and London (see her letters, Brissac's instructions, the frequent journeys

¹ The Abbé de la Roche-Fontenilles. In the margin ; "Salanave will prove that this Abbé dined with her on the day Maussabré, Brissac's page, and a conspirator of August 10, was taken."

² The unsigned letter from the innocent artist bears the following remark : " Letter from the woman Le Brun, painter, and mistress of Calonne."

of her courier and her valet-de-chambre, Peuchet, from London to Paris, and from Paris to London, a letter from Forth . . . from which she tore off the signature, because August 10, or at least the struggle between liberty and royalty, was approaching; and the villain Béthune-Charost has admitted to me that Forth was in Paris at this time in order to help the Court; the use she made at this time of d'Angremont, who has since been executed for having recruited for the Court, and who ranged Paris in the Du Barry's carriage and used her horses); by her connections with this same d'Angremont, as appears from the accompanying document, which shows that she obtained eight guns from the police-administration of Paris on the strength of an order signed Perron, under the pretext of a non-existent demand from the local authorities of Louveciennes, a fact to which the inhabitants can bear witness (she therefore did it to arm her château; and note the period, which was the beginning of the year 1790, when all the former noblemen tried to arm themselves while spewing forth infamies about the National Guard); by her connection with Barthier, formerly Lord Lieutenant of Paris, who took refuge with her . . .; with the former Chevalier d'Escourre, Brisac's equerry, imprisoned at La Force . . . who acted as intermediary in the making of the loans to the Bishop of Rouen, the Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld, son of the former Duchess de Danville, Condorcet's friend, and to Rohan-Chabot, son-in-law to the same Duchess de Danville (besides the Du Barry's loans to the Bishop of Rouen, it would seem from Vandenyver's accounts, that these two gentlemen, as also the Viscount de Juilhac, formerly a cavalry officer, all received considerable sums from the Du Barry at this period); with the former Princess de Rohan-Rochefort, a woman whose wickedness was greater than her folly; with the villainous *suicide* La Vallery, governor of Seine-et-Oise; with the former Viscount De Pont (Donnissant and De Pont dined with the Du Barry on the Tuesday after Whitsunday this year; which just shows how she had broken off all her counter-revolutionary connections!). . . .

3. She kept up a correspondence with the *émigrés*.

Proofs. Various letters found in her house, her correspondence and communications with La Mortemart . . . the fact that she spent the night after Brissac's death in

burning letters (we have witnesses of this deed at Louve-ciennes) ; a register, found there, of forces intended for the Netherlands, dated from Luxembourg, as if coming from Vienna. See the documents you have, and particularly a short letter dated from Brussels, the envelope of which you will find among the documents I send you to-day, and the ducal arms on which seem to be those of the former Prince de Ligne. . . .

4. She supplied the counter-revolution with money.

Proofs. The order on her banker in 1793 (in the month of January) to pay the Bishop of Rouen the sum of 200,000 livres within a week ; the order was made in London, at the time when Pitt was stirring up war, civil and international, against us ; that, in spite of her assumed devotion to France, she lived on the most intimate terms with the Duke of Queensberry, Lord Hawkesbury, Lord Loughborough, the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, the ex-Chancellor of England, Lord Pembroke, who is now commanding the English cavalry against us in the Netherlands, Whitshed Keene, first Lord-in-Waiting and favourite of George III., with all the most violent enemies of France, all in London ! All the documents we found prove it, as well as the testimony of Blache and others, and I shall myself prove it from the documents transferred to you. . . . The loan of 20,000 livres made in the same month to Rohan-Chabot. . . . The one made in the month of January to the Bishop of Rouen, of a similar sum, by an order on her banker in London.

5. She always built upon the counter-revolution.

Proofs. Her silver plate hidden in a secret place in her cellar, her diamonds, gold and precious stones buried in her garden. . . . Why did she have them hidden, instead of giving or selling them to the Republic ? The reply is obvious. . . .

6. She has made counter-revolutionary remarks against the Revolution and against Paris. . . .

7. She wore mourning for the tyrant in London, where she only visited the *émigrés* and the enemies of France.

8. She always detested the Revolution, instigated counter-revolutionary feeling, encouraged detractors of the Revolution, and protected the royalists.

Proofs. The innumerable counter-revolutionary writings, pamphlets and prints found in her house, not one single

one of which is patriotic ; her subscription to all the aristocratic journals, having, after every change we have undergone, taken those which corresponded most nearly with her own ways of thinking, beginning with the *Actes des Apôtres* and the *Gazette de Paris*, and down by degrees to the *Gazette universelle*, the political correspondence of Du Pont, and the counter-revolutionary writings of the Federalists ; the proof lies in the documents, and in the medal of Pitt found hidden in the room of her favourite and confidant, La Roussel.

9. She has always favoured the counter-revolutionists, and prosecuted the patriots. . . .

10. She has favoured our foreign enemies.

Proofs. In her frequent journeys to London at the most noteworthy periods of our Revolution ; in Brissac's instructions to her ; in the favour she enjoyed at the Court of London, at the very time when this same Court drove all the patriotic Frenchmen out of England in the most atrocious manner, for she stayed there until the middle of the month of March, although war was declared at the beginning of February ; far from being driven out of London, she only returned when she heard of the confiscation of her property at Louveciennes, and she asked to return to London a week after she came home, as is proved by her diary of her travels, by her applications to Lebrun, and by the documents certifying the supposed necessity for her presenting herself in London on April 14 (she had come home on March 23), a certificate signed by the most contemptible courtiers of the tyrant George . . . , by the medal of Pitt, by the writings from Coblenz, Rome, London, etc., etc.

11. She has squandered the resources of the State.

Proofs.

12. She tried to dispose of her treasures when she saw that her scandalous activity and her counter-revolutionary conduct had attracted attention.

Proofs. That, in spite of her assurances to the district of Versailles that she had "very little silver-plate" left, she dug up an enormous quantity that she had hidden in a wall . . . , part of which she sent to Paris, a little at a time. . . . She sold a strong-box by the help of an abbé. . . . She had already tried to sell her diamonds in Holland in 1790 (see Vandenyver's letters) and when they came back, a real or feigned theft (there are two articles of

gold-mounted diamonds found buried in her garden, which are described among the articles supposed to be lost) led to their being taken . . . to England, where they now are, *acknowledged as belonging to her though no thief has suffered by as much as a scratch for having stolen them* . . .

13. Whatever the truth may be, this mysterious robbery has given her an excuse for making several journeys to London, of which the two courts have apparently taken advantage to send each other information, etc., without committing the crime of emigration; see also how artfully she worked in concert with Lebrun, with Vandenyver, with acknowledged double-dealers among the governors of Versailles,¹ and with the weak or corrupted municipal authorities of Louveciennes, in order to avoid being classed among the *émigrés*. Such art and foresight are indeed worthy of one schooled by that profound master of Machiavellism, Forth.

Moral proofs arising out of the documents, the periods and the probabilities in question.

14. She has been considered an *émigrée* by the district. *Note* that she has always been protected, in the most scandalous manner, by several governors of the district; she still is!!! . . .

She ought in fact to be considered an *émigrée*.

Proofs. She can only produce passports for six weeks, . . . and she was away for nearly six months without having them renewed. . . . Why should the Du Barry enjoy the privilege of breaking the law with impunity? . . .²

Under the reign of the Terror, when those on whom suspicion but glanced were liable to suffer the death penalty, Madame Du Barry could scarcely hope to escape. Once arrested, her condemnation was certain; a single accusation proved against her would have been enough, and Greive had

¹ In the margin: "Fournier, the justice of the peace at Marly, is prepared to prove that her steward, Morin, admitted to him that he feared nothing for his mistress, because he was sure of La Vallery and the other governors of Seine-et-Oise."

² A fifteenth charge refers to Madame Du Barry's untruthful allegations as to her fortune. Greive also drew up a list of witnesses to be heard, indicating in each case what was the most damaging evidence.

collected so many, all supported by facts and witnesses. The guillotine had become an institution in Paris and the provinces. On October 16, Marie-Antoinette greeted death as a deliverer ; on the 31st the Girondins went to the scaffold, on November 8 Madame Roland, on the 12th Bailly. The mob demanded famous heads ; and the " aristocrat " of Louveciennes could not be forgotten for long.

Deserted and alone at Sainte-Pélagie, Madame Du Barry yet had the energy to make an appeal to the pity of the Committee of Public Safety ; and indeed if intelligence and will alone could have saved her life, she would have succeeded in doing so by herself. Her gentle, indulgent soul was for once touched by the passion of hatred, and in a few contemptuous lines she accused Greive, the man who had bound her hands and was dragging her to her death. Then, with gentle words she supplicated the harsh Tribunal :

For the second time citizeness Du Barry, a victim of denunciation, appears before the Committee of Public Safety. The members of the Committee are no longer the same, but the principles by which they are guided are the same ; they are all equally inspired by the same principles of equity and impartiality, and thus, with the most complete confidence, she can submit her conduct to the scrutiny of those to whom circumstances have made these principles a law.

The first thing of importance to be done, is to make known the accuser. He has given his name himself. After having tried to ruin the petitioner's reputation by a defamatory libel, Citizen Greive has made vain attempts to outrage the integrity of the Committee ; innocence triumphed, but the accuser would take no rebuff ; he dared to write it, and finally, when the Committee of Public Safety was renewed, he renewed his denunciation.

It is horrible to think that the same Greive was entrusted with carrying out the orders of the Committee ; the manner in which he acquitted himself of his duty betrays the violence of his animosity against the petitioner, and the fatal consequences that might ensue if the wisdom of the Committee were not a protection, placing her above all fear.

Every formality was violated ; the very orders of the Committee did not curb him, for he plainly transgressed them.

He began by taking possession of the petitioner's person. *Words cannot describe the horrible outrages of which he was guilty.* . . . He set about opening, and even breaking in, the doors, and lastly examining papers.

The law, which is the protection of all, justice and the very orders of the Committee demand that this examination should have been made in the petitioner's presence. What refuge is there for her, if the malice of her enemies succeeds in charging her with the possession of suspicious papers? What redress can she win? Against whom should she use this redress, if they succeed in depriving her of some of her property? Citizen Greive is an undomiciled stranger, since he is now in Paris, now at Luciennes, staying with citizens to whom he is a stranger, and without any known means of subsistence.

To his arbitrary and law-breaking deeds citizen Greive has added the inhumanity of depriving the petitioner of her *assignats*, of refusing her the use of her linen and the fruits of her garden, in that he has driven her out of her house in order to take possession of it and put himself in her place and position. After this exposure can the Committee judge him worthy of their confidence?

The petitioner makes no complaint of the hard measures taken against her. As long as these measures are in the cause of public safety and dictated by justice, she can submit to them with patience, and bear her fate without complaint. . . . But she trusts the members of the Committee will be so kind as to examine her conduct as soon as possible, in order that they may determine upon her case, with full knowledge. . . . In a word, of what is she accused?

Her journeys to England? Their purpose is known, as she avowed to the constituted authorities in order to prevent even the breath of suspicion falling upon her devotion to the cause of the Revolution. She returned to France before the termination of the affair which took her to London, relating to her stolen property, which she has not yet regained; since then she has had no correspondence abroad.

Is she blamed for not being patriotic? But she has always given evidence of strong feelings of patriotism. The local authorities and the inhabitants of Louveciennes have

testified to it ; all the examinations made by the Department of Seine-at-Oise resulted in depositions highly in her favour ; all the documents were laid before the former Committee ; will the present members not have them brought before them, too ?

Strong in the assurance of her innocence and good conduct, the petitioner awaits with confidence the decision that will restore her liberty.

The whole line of defence taken up by the accused is indicated in the above appeal, and she was to abide by it bravely in her coming trial. Greive delivered his report to the Committee of Public Safety, and two members, Voulland and Jagot, came to the prison on October 30 and began the first examination of "the woman called Du Barry." With a presence of mind that she retained to the end, she tried to justify herself without betraying any one, as the documents preserved have proved.

National Convention.—Committee of Public Safety.

(On the 9th of the 2nd month of year II. of the Republic one and indivisible.)

Q. What is your name ?

A. Jeanne Vaubernier Du Barry, aged 42 years (*sic*), usually resident at Luciennes in a house that is as much mine as the Nation's.

Q. Did you make various journeys to London ?

A. I made four.

Q. What was the purpose of these different journeys and when were they made ?

A. They were on account of the theft of diamonds and other goods which I suffered during the night of January 10, 1791.

Q. Was there not a limit put in your passport to the time you were allowed to spend in London ?

A. The time was not limited, and could not reasonably have been so, seeing that a lawsuit was in question.

Q. While you were in London the National Convention issued several edicts compelling all Frenchmen who had left the Republic after a certain date to return, under penalty of being considered *émigrés*, and treated as such if they did not. Did you know of them ?

A. I knew of those edicts, but could not believe they applied to me, as the reason why I left was known and I had a passport.

Q. People who took an interest in you wrote to persuade you to return to France. . . . Why did you neglect this advice ?

A. I do not remember having received a letter containing such advice. If I had, I should have followed it.

We at once produced a letter in which citizen Vandenyver wrote on November 19, 1792, to the respondent, warning her that " the edicts of the National Convention fulminated " against those he called " absent subjects, who are all considered as *émigrés*." The respondent, while recognising the letter, alleged an exception in the following phrase : " However, I do not think you can be regarded as such, considering the passports with which you are provided, and the notoriety of the purpose of your journey, namely, your lawsuit, which is generally known." The respondent stated that this phrase was the determining motive for her continued stay in London. . . . We then marked the said letter and the respondent added her signature to ours.

The examination was continued on the subject of the loans, which were incontestably the gravest charge against her. Madame Du Barry admitted having lent Rohan Chabot two hundred thousand livres, but she denied all the rest.

Q. At the same time did you not lend the Bishop of Rouen a sum of 200,000 livres, through Vandenyver ?

A. No, that can only be the sum lent to Rohan-Chabot, and I persist in saying that he is the only person to whom I lent 200,000 livres.

We immediately laid before the respondent a letter, written to her by Vandenyver during her stay in London, and dated January 7, 1793, where the following might be read : " Under such circumstances a citizen came to tell us that you intended he should be provided with the sum of 200,000 livres to be lent to the Bishop of Rouen, by a mortgage on landed property, and that it was to be paid this week."

The accused had no better defence as regards the two letters from de Custine, which she said she had taken by

mistake from the hôtel de Brissac, "when writing there one day at a bureau."¹ She was questioned with the same minuteness on all the correspondence seized in her house. She replied simply, always ready with an explanation, and without attempting to conceal circumstances that the seizure of her papers had made evident, but rather doing her best to show that they had arisen quite naturally. Thus she made clear her position with regard to the Princess de Rohan-Rochefort, the Princess Lubomirska, the Marquise and the Duchess de Mortemart, letting slip no word of imprudence, but counting on the good faith of her judges. The latter recurred several times to the subject of the money lent to the *émigrés*, who had taken refuge in London.

Q. Explain to us an account you kept, according to which you distributed several guineas to various people in London, such as those named Pauline, Henriette, Fortuné, Monsieur Melino, and Frondeville?

A. The woman named Pauline is Madame de Mortemart, the one named Henriette is my waiting-woman, the man named Fortuné is English, Monsieur Melino is English, Frondeville is President of the Parliament of Rouen. The sums that I gave to Madame de Mortemart were for things I required; those distributed to Henriette, my waiting-woman, were for the same purpose; Melino was entrusted with the management of my lawsuit, and had made advances which I had to repay; Fortuné and Frondeville were commissioned to play on my account.

Other questions followed, on the correctness of the list of stolen jewels, and on the cash the Countess had kept by her, which action constituted a grave offence. Finally she signed the official report with Jagot and Voulland.

Two days later, on the 11th Brumaire, year II., the same two representatives of the people went to the prison of La Force in order to examine Vandenyver senior. When questioned on the negotiations of the Countess, the banker,

¹ The General de Custine had been guillotined on the previous August 28; his trial had roused popular fury to the utmost, and the smallest connection with the "traitor" was enough to compromise any accused person.

notwithstanding his extreme prudence, could not entirely conceal certain suspicious monetary transactions, nor the scandal of an immense fortune having been placed at the disposal of the enemies of the State.

For two months the poor woman was kept in the prison in solitary confinement. But after that she probably received a visit from one of the brave priests who used to penetrate into the dungeons in order to administer the consolations of religion to the unfortunate captives. One would like to believe in the authenticity of an anecdote, dating probably from the time of her detention in Sainte-Pélagie ; at least it is quite in agreement with Madame Du Barry's character.

"A little before the Countess Du Barry was guillotined, on December 8, 1793, an Irish priest succeeded in gaining access to her, in the prison of La Conciergerie (*sic*), and offered to save her, if she could provide him with the necessary money for bribing the gaolers and paying for the journey. She asked him if he could not save two people ; he replied that his project only permitted of one being saved. 'In that case,' said Madame Du Barry, 'I shall certainly give you an order on my banker for the necessary sum, but I should much rather that the Duchess de Mortemart escaped death than I. She is in hiding in the loft of such and such a house at Calais ; here is a draft on my banker, now fly to her aid.' After having attempted to persuade her to allow him to get her out of prison, the priest, being at last convinced that she put the Duchess first, took the draft, obtained the money, went to Calais, brought the Duchess de Mortemart out of her hiding-place, disguised her as a woman of the people and, taking her under his care, made her travel on foot with him, saying that he was a good constitutional priest, married to the woman ; people answered *bravo* and let them pass. He thus succeeded in passing the French troops and came to Ostend, whence he embarked for England with Madame de Mortemart, whom I have since seen in London." ¹

¹ *Mémoires d'un voyageur qui se repose*, Paris, 1806. Dutens is

Whatever the actual service that Madame Du Barry rendered to the Duke de Brissac's daughter may have been, it is at least certain that she thought much of her when in prison. Her return to France had been inspired by the hope of making herself useful to her; she had seen the Duchess in Calais the last time she passed through that town; and among the *émigrés* it was a well-known fact that she had sacrificed herself in the cause of her affection.¹

After the examinations and the production of the documents, the decision reached by the Committee of Public Safety was inevitable. By an order of the 29th Brumaire, Madame Du Barry was arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal for "emigrating, and for having, while in London . . . given the *émigrés* pecuniary aid . . . and maintained suspicious relations with them." On the 2nd Frimaire (November 22) the prisoner was taken to the Palais, and appeared before René François Dumas, vice-president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, who examined her for the second time, in the presence of the Public Prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville. She replied fearlessly, bravely recognising the responsibilities of her life as a favourite, upon which the magistrate maliciously dwelt, and repelling with energy the serious accusations levelled against her. Dumas kept her before him for a whole hour; when back in her prison, she wrote to Fouquier, appealing only to his sense reputed truthful in his anecdotes, and his account seems to be confirmed by the fact that the Duchess de Mortemart, after having stayed in London at the same time as Madame Du Barry, spent some time in Calais in 1793, where the Countess was said to have seen her, on the occasion of her last return to France.

¹ Such was the opinion of the two best-informed men of the period, the Marquis de Bouillé and the Count d'Espinchal. The testimony of the former has already been quoted on p. 286; that of the latter, who was far from England, is less confirmatory and introduces a particular that it is impossible to verify. "The motive, that induced her to return, is said to be the knowledge which she alone possessed, of a million which had belonged to the Duke de Brissac, and which she hoped to assist in restoring to the Duchess Pauline de Mortemart, his only daughter." Though not necessarily adopting this view, the number of indications of the bonds of affection uniting Madame Du Barry and the Duchess de Mortemart should be noted.

of justice, in an attempt to soften the heart of the man, whom she yet felt to be implacable.

Citizen Public Prosecutor,

In your impartial examination of the unfortunate action that Greive and his associates have raised against me before the Tribunal, I hope you will only see in me the victim of an intrigue aimed at my destruction.

I never emigrated ; I never even intended doing so.

The use I made of the two hundred thousand livres, which Escourre delivered to citizen Rohan on my behalf, should be conclusive proof of that, even to the most prejudiced person.

I never provided the *émigrés* with money, I never kept up criminal correspondence with them ; and if I was compelled by circumstances, both in London and in France, to see persons of the Court, or persons who were perhaps not in complete agreement with the proceedings of the Revolution, yet I sincerely hope, citizen Public Prosecutor, that you will, in the justice and equity of your heart, estimate aright both the circumstances in which I have always found myself, and my relations, which are well-known and were forced upon me, with citizen Brissac, whose correspondence is before you.

I trust in your sense of justice ; you may count on the eternal gratitude of your fellow-citizeness

Vaubernier Du Barry.

If Fouquier Tinville deigned to glance at this letter, his only reply, on the 13th Frimaire, was to draw up the prosecution, and to demand the immediate removal of the accused and her accomplices to the Conciergerie. The next day their names were entered on the register of that prison from which few who entered ever came forth, except to meet their death.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the 16th Frimaire (December 6), Madame Du Barry and the three Vandenyvers appeared before the terrible Tribunal, officially defended by Chauveau-Legarde and Lafleuterie. Dumas, the vice-president, presided over the court ; Fouquier-Tinville made sure that " trusty " jurors, such as Prieur and Trin-chard, were present. The accused, whose manner was self-

possessed, took their seats. In spite of her privations, her sleepless nights, her tears, Madame Du Barry was still strong, and could view without trembling the host of witnesses prepared to give evidence against her to the utmost of their capacity ; among them were Zamore, whom she had brought up, Salanave, who for twenty years had been her cook, her servants, and inhabitants of Louveciennes, to whom she had shown nothing but kindness, and whose ingratitude now cloaked itself under the name of patriotism. With what thoughts did she look on Greive, who sat in the chief place, brooding over his prey ? Was the contempt of the disdainful beauty great enough to make her once more choose death rather than him ?

There was a crowd of spectators in the great hall of Liberty,¹ for the chief defendant was a celebrated woman, and the drama to be played out was exciting, as well as obscure and complicated. All that remains to us now are the notes taken by Fouquier-Tinville and the juror Topino-Lebrun on the replies made to President Dumas.²

First of all the Countess was examined. In deep silence her gentle voice was heard declaring her name, her birth-place, and her age, which a last coquettish instinct made her give as forty-two ; and, indeed, she was still pretty enough to be believed, as the eyes of the men, no doubt, told her. Fouquier wrote as follows : " 1. Jeanne Vaubernier, wife of Du Barry, legally separated, forty-two years, born at Vaucouleurs, in Lorraine, resident at Louveciennes ; 2. Jean-Baptiste Vandenyver, 66 years, Dutch banker, born in Amsterdam, resident rue Vivienne ; 3. Edme-Jean-Baptiste Vandenyver, 32 years, banker, born in Paris ; 4. Antoine-Augustin Vandenyver, 29 years, banker, born in Paris." Wolf, the Master of the Rolls, read the deed of prosecution, the witnesses took the oath, and Greive was called. Fouquier-

¹ Formerly the great hall of the Parliament; now the chief hall of the Court of Appeal.

² Favrolle (Madame Guénard) was the first to know of Fouquier's notes, and the other documents. Vatel added Topino's notes, and published the whole, without taking the trouble to correct the numerous inaccuracies, which may easily mislead the reader.

Tinville, whose place was on the first step of the tribunal, took down the evidence with his swift pen "that seemed to follow every word":

George Greive, born in England, and deputy of the United States of America:—The Du Barry hindered recruiting at Luciennes.—In the night of September 22 last, the day of her arrest, a quantity of silver plate was found in a receptacle used for keeping gardening-tools . . . also the famous gold service and precious stones and emeralds; in another place gold coins, pieces of six livres, were found buried in the ground, as also bronzes and a bust of Louis XV. . . . Further, in the woman Roussel's room, the medal of Pitt hidden under bran. Further, a large number of articles said to have been stolen, pencil-cases, a golden lorgnette. . . .

Forth, the English spy, came to Paris in 1777. This Forth was rewarded with a considerable pension, and made several journeys from Paris to London, and *vice-versa* from London to Paris. A letter found among the Dubarry's papers shows the erased signature of Forth, and of Béthune-Charost, who was closely connected with this Forth.

[To a question from the President, the accused] replied that she did not know whose was the portrait of a woman found hidden in a dunghill. The portrait was found together with one of Louis XV. dressed as a Carmelite.

The Du Barry had various lodgings in Paris, where she held meetings of a crowd of *émigrés* or of their relatives.—On the Du Barry's return, witness was presented on March 26, 1793, with an English certificate signed by the Duke of Queensberry, a great enemy of the Revolution. On the strength of this certificate she made all her requests for passports. . . . Witness has seen Forth with, and visiting the Du Barry.—The general opinion of the neighbourhood is that the theft was a feint, and that, further, the theft, whether real or not, was used as an excuse by Forth.—Another fact is that the diamonds were sent to Holland in November, 1790, and came back in January, 1791.—The Du Barry received Forth in July, 1792.—Several letters from Forth were found in her house, one of which was defaced.—She declared in her examination that her lawsuit was over, after her return in March, 1793. Why then

did the certificate say she was compelled to return to England?

Here the accused protested. "The Du Barry," wrote Fouquier-Tinville, "said it was for receiving her diamonds and paying expenses."

After Greive, his colleague, Xavier Audoin, was called to give evidence on the search carried out at Louveciennes after August 10: "The house was full of the former noblemen of the Court; one called Maussabré was seized in one of the accused's rooms. . . ." Next, Blache, the man who spied on her in London, came forward:

Saw some of the diamonds in England.—Saw Forth, the English spy, and the woman Calonne get out of a carriage . . . and the man named Pont, whom he heard was an ex-Constitutional; they went into the Du Barry's house, and a moment afterwards all four came out and got into Calonne's carriage.—During her second stay in London she lived at Westminster, in a house hired by the Abbé Saint-Phar for Bouillé, the Princess d'Hénin, Bertrand de Molleville, the Minister for the Navy, the Duchess de Mortemart, Breteuil and other *émigrés*.—In January, 1793, they heard of Louis Capet's death; French patriots were molested, insulted and driven away.—The Du Barry, while in London, went into mourning when the death of the former King became known. Shortly after, Brissot declared war on England.—On one of her journeys, made the wife of the former Duke d'Aiguillon emigrate with her.

Blache brought together numerous petty details, spoke of his visits to Louveciennes, his suppers with Salanave and Frémont, the gardener, whom the accused had dismissed as a patriot, of the favours the accused was said to have obtained from La Vallery, of the counter-revolutionary activities of Morin. . . . How often the poor woman must have wanted to interrupt to defend herself and confound her accusers! Then she was questioned by Dumas. Though agitated at being taken unawares, she soon regained her composure and, after her first reply, showed as much cunning and intelligence as the President himself. But the evidence was against her.

Silence reigned among the interested spectators. Among their crowded ranks, perhaps, there was one who would take to the unhappy Rohan-Chabot the last words of his mistress ; perhaps the Countess knew, and was thereby inspired with the courage that she needed to keep her from giving way.

Meanwhile Fouquier-Tinville continued to take his notes :

The Du Barry asserts that her third journey was undertaken in order to set Forth at liberty, he having been arrested in consequence of an action brought against him by the thieves.—The Du Barry saw the woman Calonne in London. She admits it, but denies having kept up correspondence with others, except the woman Mortemart, with whom the correspondence was merely that of friendship.—The Du Barry admits having worn black for the tyrant, but asserts that she never wore anything else.—The Du Barry admits having petitioned on behalf of La Bondie who was arrested at her house as a suspect.—The Du Barry asserts that she obtained certificates of residence, as she had always resided in France.—The Du Barry asserts that she received some petitions connected with the formation of the last guard of the former King, but that she had not in any way influenced the nominations. . . .

Escourre, who was imprisoned in La Force, was called to give evidence on the subject of the loans which he had negotiated. But he was confused in his explanations, faltered, and contradicted himself, and, in spite of his devotion to the Countess, did her nothing but injury. Fouquier rose, demanded an official report of the tergiversations of the witness, and ordered that he should be forthwith conducted to La Conciergerie, “ as charged with perjury and complicity in a criminal and counter-revolutionary intercourse.” It was equivalent to his death-sentence.¹

After this incident, unfavourable to the accused, the procession of witnesses was continued. First came Salanave, who declared that he had always been looked on unfavour-

¹ D'Escourre was condemned on the 21st Frimaire (December 11, 1793), and executed the same day. The documents connected with his trial are analysed by Vatel ; they refer to a letter to Rohan-Chabot, of which the original has been preserved in Madame Du Barry's *dossier*.

ably in the house of the accused, where all the other servants were "aristocrats"; he gave a list of those who were frequent visitors at Louveciennes: La Vaupalière, Brissac, La Bondie, Escourre, "a former Marquis Donnissan, a former Viscount De Pont, the woman Bandeville, the woman Brunoy, formerly Marquise; the former Duchess Brancas, the former Chevalier Maussabré."

A discussion took place on De Pont, whom the accused denied having seen in England: "Blache insisted that she had, and stated that De Pont was the man who provided Burke, the author of the diatribe against the Constitution of 1791, with information." Zamore was called; Greive had mentioned him as one of the chief witnesses.¹ He only gave evidence on matters that were already known; in particular he wanted to establish the improbability of the diamond robbery:

Witness considers the diamond robbery an invention. The diamonds were kept in a cabinet that served as a vestibule to a room (*sic*). It was announced that the thieves entered from the garden by means of a broken window, and no other damage had been observed except for some rails that had been wrenched. Knows that the most valuable things were kept in the Du Barry's room. Witness believes that the theft was not real. . . .

Henriette Couture, the young waiting-woman, was in mortal fear of being compromised; she falteringly admitted

¹ Zamore's treachery did not prevent his being suspected and imprisoned in his turn. Greive intervened by means of a letter to Fouquier-Tinville, asking for the release of "our virtuous Zamore, that child of Nature, that apostle of Liberty, that worthy pupil of the immortal Jean-Jacques, who has been torn from his duties as Secretary to the Revolutionary Committee of Versailles, where he had found a refuge from the Du Barry's atrocious persecution of him on account of his patriotism." "You have seen him," wrote Greive, referring to the trial of Frimaire, "you have heard this interesting person who, torn from the bosom of his family at the age of four, and brought to Europe to become the toy of a crapulous tyrant's vile mistress, was yet able . . . to escape all the corruption of an infamous Court, and show himself the ardent supporter of the Republic, even as early as 1789! . . . Oh! if you only knew our good Zamore! Ask what the patriots of the *Café Procope* think of him, where he is respected by all who are worthy of respect."

that accused had spent the night after Brissac's arrest in burning papers.

Another of her women, Henriette Roussel ("a medium figure, pock-marked," wrote Fouquier), said that Forth "returned on the second journey"; she affirmed that her mistress always took black dresses to London, "and a few white ones." Devray, the surgeon, confirmed the destruction of papers; Fournier, justice of the peace for the district of Marly, gave evidence on the articles found in Madame Du Barry's house, and "recognised a portion of those announced as stolen and described in the printed list." The accused insisted that these articles had been returned to Monsieur de Brissac, who gave a reward of a hundred louis. When again questioned on some points, she "could not say how much money she had spent in London and supplied to the *émigrés* . . ."

The president proceeded next to examine the Vandenyvers; they had to answer as to Madame Du Barry's affairs, the letters of credit they had given her, the loans she had made through their instrumentality, and as to their personal relations with Calonne and the Tuileries. Interest in the examination was at an end, for the bankers were sure to share the fate of their customer.

Fouquier-Tinville rose to make the judicial address. In order that it should be worthy of the trial of the "infamous conspirator" he had prepared his exordium and peroration with care. The rough drafts, which are full of erasures, have been kept in the *dossier*, and the revolutionary orator may easily be recognised in its turgid phrases and its flood of hyperboles:

Exordium.

Citizen Jurymen,

You have pronounced judgment on the plots of the wife of the last tyrant who ruled the French; you are now asked to pronounce judgment on the conspiracies of the courtesan of his infamous predecessor. You see before you this Lais, so celebrated for her dissolute morals, for the publicity and parade of her debauchery, whose licentiousness alone empowered her to share the life of a despot, who

sacrificed the wealth and blood of his people to the satisfaction of his shameful pleasures. The scandal, the ignominy of her elevation to power, are not what should engage your attention, nor the turpitude and shame of her infamous prostitution. You are here to decide whether this Messalina, born of the people, enriched and covered with the spoils of the people, who paid for the indignity of her looseness of morals, and deprived by the death of the tyrant of the rank which crime alone had given her, whether she conspired against the liberty and sovereignty of the people ; whether, after being the accomplice and instrument of the licentiousness of kings, she has become the tool of tyrants, nobles and priests in their conspiracies against the Revolution. Citizen jurymen, the examining of the witnesses has already thrown the clearest light on these conspiracies. From the evidence and documents produced you must have realised some of the extent of this vast plot, these execrable machinations, hitherto unexampled in the annals of the people. Never, indeed, has a more important case been submitted to you for decision, since to a certain degree it gives you the clue to the intrigues of Pitt and all his accomplices against France.

You are asked to bear in mind all the details of this plot, and of the part the courtesan of despots and her accomplices have taken in it.

Peroration.

Such, citizen jurymen, are the results of the examinations that have taken place. It is for you to weigh them, in your wisdom. You see that Royalists and Federalists and all these factions, though apparently divided among themselves, have yet the same head, the same purpose, the same end in view. The war against other nations, the rising in the Vendée, the disturbances in the South, the insurrection of Calvados, all are inspired by the same principle, and have the same chiefs, d'Artois and Péthion ; all are directed by Pitt, and if, hitherto, we have, so to speak, only raised the veil cloaking so much villainy, we can say to-day that it has been completely torn asunder, and naught remains to the conspirators but shame and the punishment of their infamous plots. Yea, Frenchmen, we swear it, the traitors shall perish, and liberty alone be upheld. She has resisted, and will ever resist all attempts of the united despots, of heir slaves, their priests, their infamous courtesans. The

people will fell to the ground all her enemies, all this horde of brigands leagued against her. With the riches she acquired by her debauchery, the infamous conspirator before you could live in the heart of a country that appeared to have buried with the tyrant, whose worthy companion she was, every memory of her prostitution and of the scandal of her elevation to power. But the liberty of the people was a crime in her eyes ; she wanted them enslaved and cringing under masters, she wanted the best part of their substance to be devoted to the payment of her pleasures. She is an example, which goes with many others to prove more and more conclusively that licentiousness and looseness of morals are the greatest enemies of the liberty and happiness of the people. In striking with the sword of justice a Messalina, guilty of conspiring against her country, you will not only avenge the Republic for her outrages against the law, but you will destroy a public scandal, and strengthen the empire of morality, which is the chief foundation of the empire of the people.

The envenomed verbiage of the Public Prosecutor added nothing to the conviction of the jury that they had already formed on the evidence ; nor was it shaken by the defending advocates, whose speeches followed. Madame Du Barry was defended by Chauveau-Lagarde, who had done the same for Marie Antoinette. Dumas summed up the case ; the jury went out, and returned with a reply in the affirmative to all the questions. It was eleven o'clock at night when the accused were brought back to hear their sentence :

In view of the certainty of the fact that machinations have been practised and communications maintained with the enemies of the State and their agents to induce them to engage in hostilities, to point out and support the means of undertaking these hostilities and directing them against France, notably by making several journeys abroad on carefully prepared pretexts, in order to concert these hostile schemes with their enemies, by providing them or their agents with pecuniary aid ;

Jeanne Vaubernier, wife of Du Barry, resident at Luciennes, formerly a courtesan, is convicted of being one of the

authors or accomplices of the said machinations and communications ;

Jean-Baptiste Vandenyver, Dutch banker, domiciled in Paris, Edme-Jean-Baptiste Vandenyver, banker in Paris, and Antoine-Augustin Vandenyver, banker in Paris, are convicted of being accomplices to the said machinations and communications ;

Having heard the Public Prosecutor's conclusions as to the application of the law :

The said Jeanne Vaubernier, wife of Du Barry, the said J. B. Vandenyver, E.-J.-B. Vandenyver and A.-A. Vandenyver are condemned to suffer the penalty of death.¹

The unhappy woman, whose spirit was already broken by the long days of suspense through which she had passed, fainted away. The gendarmes took her back to her dungeon, and the night of misery that followed may be imagined. In the morning her hair was cut short, and she was dressed in the robe of the condemned. She asked to be heard once more, no doubt in order to gain time and make another attempt to buy her life.² Placed between two gratings in the Conciergerie, she declared she had buried in her garden or handed to her servants a gold service, jewel-boxes, diamond chains, rings, portraits of Louis XV., miniatures of a woman, crested plate, "two Turkish daggers set with rubies and other precious stones. . . ."³

¹ As soon as the decree was issued, on the 17th Frimaire, Fouquier gave his orders to the commanding officer of the Parisian armed forces with regard to the execution, which was fixed for "eleven o'clock in the morning" of the following day in the Place de la Révolution.

² Lafont d'Aussonne has told that she received promises of pardon if she would point out where her treasures were hidden, a story that does not seem unlikely. Thence her resistance and cries at the end ; she must have believed that she was being taken to the scaffold "in haste and by mistake." Prudhomme almost admits that this was the case. "As long as the woman hoped to buy her life by restoring her property to the Nation, her manner was quite composed and strong." She had therefore been allowed to cherish such a hope.

³ She mentioned, as having been hidden in Morin's garden, "eleven bags of twelve hundred livres, forty double louis brought back from London on her last journey, a gold-mounted tortoiseshell

In enumerating this hidden treasure, her memory, under the influence of the excitement of the moment, was marvelously sure ; but it is not true that in order to save her own life, she sold those of others.¹ No document gives evidence of such a deed. If she mentioned the woman Déliant and Denis Morin as those entrusted with the treasure, on the other hand she took all responsibility for their actions upon herself. Morin said so himself when he made his own declaration as to the things confided to his care : " I only acted on Madame's orders."²

These revelations by Madame Du Barry postponed the execution. Not till half-past four in the afternoon was she placed in the tumbril with the three Vandenyvers. It was the 18th day of Frimaire in the year II. (December 8, 1793), and night was falling. The convoy passed fairly quickly through the badly-lighted streets of old Paris ; it was bitterly cold, and this prevented a crowd from gathering. Thus it is scarcely probable that the poor woman's pallor could have been distinguished, or the encouraging words of the elder Vandenyver have been heard. She was prostrate on the bench, completely broken down, as were so many others when taken to the guillotine.³ Though

box set with a portrait of Marie Antoinette by Sauvage. . . . " She finally offered to write to London for the objects of the famous robbery, "if such were the pleasure of the Tribunal." The long declaration was received in proper order by the Judge Denizot and the Public Prosecutor's deputy, and taken down by the clerk Tavernier, who was said to have spent no less than three hours on the task. The original was found by Vatel in Denis Morin's *dossier*, where it had been put by Fouquier-Tinville.

¹ Louis Blanc puts the number of the victims of Madame Du Barry's supposed denunciations as high as *two hundred and forty* !

² Madame Du Barry's declaration scarcely added to the grave charges already levelled against Morin. He was arrested during the hearing of Escourre's trial, sentenced on December 23, at the same time as La Bondie, and executed with him on the same day.

³ " She went to her execution already half-dead," wrote Prudhomme "so much did the thought of death alarm her." The evidence collected by Vatel shows that such a state of weakness was frequent in those condemned. As an instance, take the very impartial observation of Restif de la Bretonne : " I have constantly remarked that, with the exception of Marianne-Charlotte, all thinking beings

the majority died bravely, some were betrayed by weakness and broke down utterly at the foot of the scaffold.

In order to make her get down, the assistant executioner had to take her in his arms and carry her to the guillotine.¹ Then at last she was roused from her torpor, and "uttered a terrible cry," a long, inhuman shriek, the outpouring of her agony and terror. Reflections have been cast on her for this passionate revolt, this anguish of spirit, yet her death seems a sacrifice. Though her frail, womanly nerves could not bear the sight of the instruments of death, yet may not a little pity be granted to her tortured body, a gentle word to her memory?

"Elmire will have no cause to fear the judgment of posterity," wrote Choderlos de Laclos in the graceful portrait that he drew of Madame Du Barry; and no doubt he wrote thus because he recognised in her besides the attraction of mind and heart, all the charm of beauty. "From her magnificent hair with its beautiful colour, down to her feet that were as if modelled by the hands of the Graces, she seemed the very personification of that beautiful ideal which the Greeks have preserved in their immortal works." If she "was not a Vestal," said Mirabeau one day,

"The fault was the gods', who made her so fair."

who go to meet their death are already half-dead." That there were other illustrious exceptions is well known.

¹ See the Count d'Espinhal's account, published in the *Revue rétrospective* for 1887, Vol. VI., p. 205. Details as to her cries were given by the paper, *Le Glaive Vengeur*, which contrasted them with the courage of the Vandenyvers. The *Révolutions de Paris* gloated at length on the agony of the "Prostitute," and recalled, in the coarse language of the day, the notorious anecdotes about "the last but one of our tyrants." The next day one of the most infamous pamphlets of the period appeared: *The Descent of the Dubarry to the infernal regions; her reception at the Court of Pluto by the woman Capet . . . cackling of the two strumpets*. The pamphlet was the last to insult the memory of Marie-Antoinette.

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